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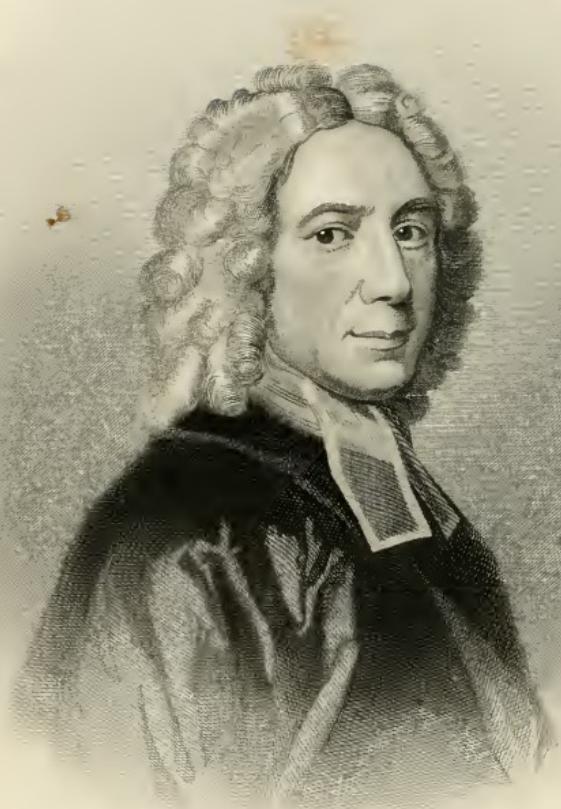


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MICHAEL WM. WHITE, D.D.

THE LIFE  
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OF  
ISAAC WATTS, D.D.

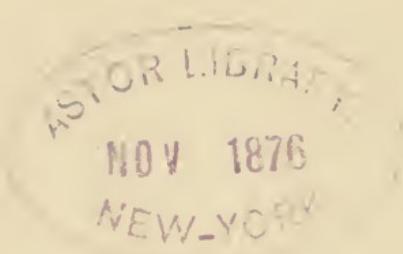
BY D. A. HARSHA,

AUTHOR OF "EMINENT ORATORS AND STATESMEN," ETC., ETC.

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## P R E F A C E.

IN preparing a series of volumes to be styled the STANDARD LIBRARY OF SACRED CLASSICS, containing, in a form adapted for popular use, the best works of eminent divines, with memoirs of their lives, notices of their writings, and estimates of their genius, we believe that we render an acceptable service to the Christian public. For what person, whose heart glows with love and gratitude to the Author of the Christian revelation, does not feel a deep interest in the lives and writings of such venerated divines as Taylor, Howe, Baxter, Owen, Watts, Doddridge, Fuller, Hall, Chalmers, Edwards, Dwight, and others of kindred spirit? Their *praise is in the gospel throughout all the churches*; and their lofty genius and fervent piety will excite the admiration of the Christian world in all future ages. It is certainly delightful, as well as profitable, for the Christian in his pilgrimage, frequently to review the lives and study the practical and devotional works of these zealous ambassadors of Christ, who through faith and patience are now inheriting the promises.

In addition to the biographical sketches, our selection will comprise many valuable treatises not readily accessible. The principal object, in the present series, will be the collection of such matter only as shall be highly conducive to the mental, moral, and religious improvement and elevation of readers of all evangelical denominations.

This volume, which is the first in the series, contains the life and choice works of ISAAC WATTS.

In the biographical memoir, we have endeavored to present, in a clear, succinct, and chronological order, the leading incidents in his long and useful life. Solicitous to render the memoir as interesting as possible to the Christian reader, we have carefully consulted the best authorities on the subject, such as *Milner's Life, Times, and Correspondence of Watts*; the Memoirs of Watts by Gibbons, Burder, Johnson, and Southey; and *Wilmott's Lives of the English Sacred Poets*.

The "choice works" which have been selected, are the Discourses on Death and Heaven—Discourses on the Love of God, etc.—An Exhort-

ation to Ministers—Select Sermons—Miscellaneous Thoughts—and Poems.

In the opinion of the excellent Dr. Doddridge, these are the most admirable works of their author. “I most admire,” says he, “the first volume of his sermons—Death and Heaven—the Love of God—and Humble Attempt—not to mention his incomparable Lyric Poems, Psalms and Hymns.” In a letter to a friend, the saintly JAMES HERVEY thus highly commends the small volume of Dr. Watts on *The Love of God, and its Influence on the Passions*: “This is indeed a most excellent book, happily calculated for usefulness. If you have never seen it, you have a pleasure yet to come, and I would by all means advise you to get it.” And the late venerated WILLIAM JAY, of Bath, once remarked, in relation to the sermons of Watts, which he always highly valued: “They are truly beautiful sermons. His ‘Inward Witness to Christianity,’ his ‘Hidden Life of a Christian,’ his ‘Peace in Death,’ his ‘No Night in Heaven,’ and ‘No Pain among the Blessed,’ his ‘Joy at the Resurrection,’ are among the sweetest and most profitable sermons in our language.” Every intelligent, pious, and discriminating person, who is well acquainted with the sermons of our most celebrated divines and those of Dr. Watts, will, we think, readily coincide in this opinion of Mr. Jay.

It is particularly interesting to know that the book on “Death and Heaven” was a favorite with Doddridge while suffering under his fatal disease, in a foreign land; and that it soothed and cheered his spirit within a short period of his death. This single statement of its usefulness to one of the most distinguished and pious servants of Christ should commend it to the careful attention of every Christian pilgrim, steadily approaching the river of death, and expecting an ETERNITY OF GLORY beyond the shores of time.

The believer will find, in the present selection, much to sustain and soothe him while journeying through the sorrows and conflicts of the Christian course, and to enliven his pathway to that better land where there is no night, no pain, no tears, no death,—*where the wicked cease from troubling, and where the weary are at rest.*

In the hope that it may prove acceptable to clergymen, instructive to Christian families, and interesting to all readers, the first volume of the STANDARD LIBRARY OF SACRED CLASSICS is now offered to the public.

ARGYLE, N. Y., June, 1857.

## CONTENTS.

---

LIFE OF ISAAC WATTS, D. D.....	PAGE 11
--------------------------------	------------

### DEATH AND HEAVEN.

#### DISCOURSE I.

THE CONQUEST OVER DEATH, 1 Cor., xv. 26.....	53
--	----

#### DISCOURSE II.

THE HAPPINESS OF SEPARATE SPIRITS, Heb., xii. 23.....	75
---	----

---

### DISCOURSES ON THE LOVE OF GOD, AND ITS INFLUENCE ON THE PASSIONS.

#### DISCOURSE I.

THE AFFECTIONATE AND SUPREME LOVE OF GOD, Mark, xii. 30.....	153
--	-----

#### DISCOURSE II.

DIVINE LOVE IS THE COMMANDING PASSION.....	164
--	-----

## DISCOURSE III.

	PAGE
THE USE OF THE PASSIONS IN RELIGION.....	183

## DISCOURSE IV.

INFERENCES FROM THE USEFULNESS OF THE PASSIONS.....	199
---	-----

## DISCOURSE V.

THE ABUSE OF THE PASSIONS IN RELIGION.....	211
--	-----

## DISCOURSE VI.

THE AFFECTIONATE CHRISTIAN VINDICATED, AND THE SINCERE SOUL COMFORTED UNDER HIS COMPLAINTS OF DEADNESS, ETC.....	230
---	-----

## DISCOURSE VII.

MEANS OF EXCITING THE DEVOUT AFFECTIONS.....	241
--	-----

---

## AN EXHORTATION TO MINISTERS.

SEC. I.—OF A MINISTER'S PERSONAL RELIGION.....	262
“ II.—OF A MINISTER'S PRIVATE STUDIES.....	265
“ III.—OF PUBLIC MINISTRATIONS.....	294
“ IV.—OF THE CONVERSATION OF A MINISTER.....	298
“ V.—A SOLEMN ENFORCEMENT OF THESE EXHORTATIONS ON THE CONSCIENCE.....	304

---

## SELECT SERMONS.

## SERMON I.

THE END OF TIME, Rev., x. 5, 6.....	315
-------------------------------------	-----

## SERMON II.

	PAGE
NO PAIN AMONG THE BLESSED, Rev., xxi. 4.....	333

## SERMON III.

NO NIGHT IN HEAVEN, Rev., xxi. 25.....	363
--	-----

## SERMON IV.

SAFETY IN THE GRAVE, AND JOY AT THE RESURRECTION, Job, xiii. 14, 15..	377
---	-----

## SERMON V.

THE DEATH OF KINDRED IMPROVED, 1 Cor., iii. 22.....	397
---	-----

## SERMON VI.

DEATH A BLESSING TO THE SAINTS, 1 Cor., iii. 22.....	407
--	-----

## SERMON VII.

THE HIDDEN LIFE OF A CHRISTIAN—THE FIRST PART, Col., iii. 3.....	425
--	-----

## SERMON VIII.

THE HIDDEN LIFE OF A CHRISTIAN—THE SECOND PART, Col., iii. 3.....	443
---	-----

## MISCELLANEOUS THOUGHTS.

A MEDITATION FOR THE FIRST OF MAY.....	465
DIVINE GOODNESS IN THE CREATION.....	467
DISTANT THUNDER.....	469
VANITY INSCRIBED ON ALL THINGS.....	470

	PAGE
THE RAKE REFORMED IN THE HOUSE OF MOURNING.....	473
THOU HAST RECEIVED GIFTS FOR MEN, Ps., lxviii. 18.....	480
BILLS OF EXCHANGE .....	482
PRAISE WAITETH FOR THEE, O GOD, IN ZION, Ps., lxv. 1.....	484
O THAT I KNEW WHERE I MIGHT FIND HIM, Job, xxiii. 3.....	487

---

## P O E M S .

DIVINE JUDGMENTS.....	493
THE DAY OF JUDGMENT.....	495
BREATHING TOWARD THE HEAVENLY COUNTRY.....	496

## LIFE OF ISAAC WATTS, D. D.

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ISAAC WATTS was born on the 17th of July, 1674, at Southampton, England. He was the eldest of nine children. His father was a man of piety, intelligence, and respectability. He presided over a flourishing boarding-school at Southampton. In his religious sentiments he was warmly attached to the Dissenters, and during the persecution in the reign of Charles the Second, was imprisoned for his non-conformity. While thus suffering on account of his religious opinions, his wife is said to have often sat on a stone near the prison-door, with the poet, then an infant, at her breast. He lived to a good old age, and had the high gratification of witnessing not only the literary celebrity of his son, but also the triumph of religious liberty. It is worthy of mention here that he possessed some poetical talents, and at the age of eighty-five, composed several verses on sacred subjects, which are simply and piously expressed.

In noticing the leading events in the life of Dr. Isaac Watts, it will be interesting to advert to his early mental culture. Like many other persons of uncommon genius, he was distinguished for his intellectual precocity, and early thirst for knowledge. Before he could speak plain, we were told that he would say, when money was given to him,—“A book! a book!—buy a book!” When only four years of age, he commenced the study of Latin, which he prosecuted with success under the direction of his father. He was soon afterwards placed under the care of the Rev. John Pinhorne, principal of a grammar-school at Southampton, where he received the rudiments of his classical education. While at this school he devoted the most of his time to the study of Latin, Greek, Hebrew, and French, in which he made commendable proficiency.

The poetical genius of Watts was developed at an early age. With Milton, Cowley, and Pope, he may be said to have "lisp'd in numbers." When only seven or eight years of age he composed devotional verses which did honor to his poetical talents. The uncommon vigor of intellect which he so early evinced, attracted the notice of several benevolent persons, who generously offered to defray the expenses of his education in one of the English universities; but Watts respectfully declined the offer, stating that he was determined to take his lot with the dissenters.

In 1690, in his sixteenth year, he was sent to London, and placed under the care of the Rev. Thomas Rowe, pastor of a dissenting congregation in that city, and principal of an institution, the object of which was to prepare students for the ministry. Here he applied himself with unremitting industry to study, and obtained a thorough academic education.

Among his fellow-students at this academy, were Hughes, the poet, author of the *Siege of Damascus*, and several papers in the Spectator, Tatler, and Guardian; Say, whose poems and essays were published after his death; and Hort, afterwards Archbishop of Tuam.

Fully aware of the importance of early forming an easy and correct style, the attention of Watts was now particularly turned to the art of composition: and, as an evidence of his industry and ability, we have several Latin essays on philosophical, moral, and theological subjects, which he composed while residing in the academy of Mr. Rowe. These academic efforts, in the opinion of Dr. Johnson, show a degree of knowledge, both philosophical and theological, such as very few attain by a much longer course of study.

As a specimen of his style of composition and of thought, at this early period of his literary career, we select a passage from the first Essay,—*Whether the doctrine of justification by faith alone tends to licentiousness.* Speaking of that divine principle which purifies the heart of man, and draws him near to God, he justly and forcibly remarks—"The love of Christ, manifested in free justification without works, more effectually and sweetly binds the soul to obedience, than any rigid measures which the fear of punishment

can use. The natures of believers are, as it were, refined; they are heaven-born, ingenuous, and easily wrought upon by love. It is a common truth, that nothing is done by hatred and fear, which might not effectually and pleasantly be performed by love. The effects of pure love are exceedingly great. We seldom, if ever, read of any who, out of mere fear of hell, would endure the greatest miseries of life. But how many thousands, being fortified with love to their Redeemer, have joyfully undergone severe torments rather than part with their obedience and holiness, notwithstanding they hoped not to be saved by them! Now the greater the love which is expressed towards us, the stronger are our engagements to love again. Consider, then, how incomparably greater is that love which appears in Christ's giving us himself and his righteousness freely, and completing by himself the work of our redemption, than if he had only entreated the Father to relax the first covenant, and put us into a possibility of acquiring heaven by our own obedience. 2. Cor. v, 14: 'The love of Christ constraineth us, because we thus judge, that if one died for all, then were all dead.' That love is a far more efficacious principle than fear, appears also from the first epistle of John. The whole letter of that beloved disciple breathes nothing but love and holiness. The first is the principle of the latter. He had learned and felt the power of love in the bosom of his Jesus, and recommended that sovereign antidote against sin, that cordial to revive dying holiness, to all the followers of his loving Saviour. Heaven is a state of most perfect holiness, and the immediate created principle of it is perfect love, as seems to be implied in 1. John iv. 18, and 1. Cor. xiii. 8—13."

In his early school-boy days Watts adopted those useful methods of study which contributed so largely to his mental improvement, and which we cannot too strongly commend to those who would aspire to the higher walks of literature. His plan was to abridge or enlarge the most valuable works he read, in order that their contents might be more deeply impressed upon his memory. He epitomized several works which were highly popular and useful in his day, such as *Gale's Court of the Gentiles*; a treatise of Lewis de la Forge on the human mind, &c. He also enlarged and improved the *Westminster Greek Grammar* by additions from the

works of Dr. Busby and Mr. Leeds. The plan which he adopted of interleaving books, and writing down the opinions of other writers on the same topics, he found to be eminently useful as affording a more comprehensive view of any subject. But those who wish to learn the process by which Dr. Watts attained his literary fame will do well to study with care his admirable treatise on the *Improvement of the mind*.

It was during his academic course that Watts cultivated with great care his poetical talents. In his *Miscellanies*, he modestly alludes to his being a "maker of verses" from the age of fifteen to that of fifty. At the age of seventeen, he wrote verses of considerable excellence, several of which were included in his *Horæ Lyricæ*. The Latin ode in honor of the Rev. John Pinhorne, his early teacher, of whom he always "retained a grateful and affectionate remembrance," is a meritorious performance for a youth of twenty. It discovers a true, poetical genius, as well as an intimate acquaintance with the most distinguished poets of Greece and Rome. The lines, addressed to his brother, written about this time, are also graceful and elegant in their construction.

But the unwearied perseverance and intemperate ardor with which Watts pursued his studies during his academic course, and his neglect of necessary exercise and repose, greatly impaired his constitution, and probably gave rise to those severe sufferings which he subsequently endured. In after life, he deeply regretted the course which he had pursued in youth, of contracting his needful sleep in order to devote more time to study. Alluding to the irreparable injury which his constitution received by the intemperate mental exertions of his early life, he has the following remarks in one of his sermons:—"Midnight studies are prejudicial to nature. A painful experience calls me to repent of the faults of my younger years; and there are many before me have had the same call to repentance." The venerable Dr. Owen was accustomed to say, that he would gladly part with all the learning he had acquired by sitting up late at study in younger life, if he could but regain the health he had lost by it.

In his nineteenth year, Watts united himself to the church of which his instructor, Mr. Rowe, was pastor. His piety, like

his genius, was early manifested. With regard to the commencement of his religious impressions, he might have adopted the beautiful language of Mrs. Rowe :—" My infant hands were early lifted up to Thee, and I soon learned to know and acknowledge the God of my fathers."

Having completed his academic course in 1694, at the age of twenty, he returned to his father's house at Southampton, where he remained two years, prosecuting those studies more intimately connected with the sacred office for which he was qualifying himself. During this period, he composed the greater part of his hymns, and probably several pieces in his *Miscellanies*. A great portion of his time was now devoted to reading, meditation, and prayer.

After again leaving the parental home in 1696, he resided the five succeeding years in the family of Sir John Hartopp, at Stoke Newington, as tutor to his son.

This distinguished family deserves a notice in this sketch. Sir John Hartopp, one of the brightest ornaments in the Church, was a decided Non-conformist, steadily adhering to the dissenting interest when "the throne, the church, and the nobility were most hostile to it." It is said that the fines imposed upon him and a few others on account of religious principles, amounted at one time to six or seven thousand pounds.\* This eminently pious man was a warm, personal friend and correspondent of the great Dr. Owen ; a regular attendant upon his ministry, and a member of his church. To him the Christian public are indebted for the preservation of many of Owen's sermons which he wrote down in short hand when delivered. He also furnished many materials for a Life of this prince of English divines. He had a taste for literary pursuits, and was versed in many of the sciences ; but the Bible was his "chief study and divinest delight." That he might better understand the text of the Scriptures, he commenced the study of Hebrew, when past the age of fifty, and retained a knowledge of the Greek language to the latest period of life. In the reign of Charles the Second, he was three times returned to Parliament. He lived to the great age of eighty-five, and died in the Christian's hope of a happy immortality.

\* Noble's Mem., ii. 333—348.

Lady Hartopp possessed the character of a truly amiable and pious person. The funeral sermons of these excellent individuals, which Dr. Watts preached, form his invaluable work on *Death and Heaven*—a favorite book with many pious readers.

The residence of Watts in the Hartopp family was always remembered by him with peculiar affection. Long afterwards he remarked—"I can not but reckon it among the blessings of Heaven, when I review those five years of pleasure and improvement, which I spent in his family in my younger part of life. And I found much instruction myself where I was called to be an instructor."

In that pious and intelligent family he enjoyed rare opportunities for mental, moral, and spiritual improvement. Besides attending faithfully to his duties as teacher, he applied himself to the study of the Scriptures in the original languages, and the best Biblical commentaries. In the early discipline of his mind, it seems that the one grand object of his life was ever kept in view—that of preaching the glorious gospel of Christ—and that all his studies were made subservient to his noble purpose.

On the 17th of July, 1698, at the age of twenty-four, he preached his first sermon, while residing in the family of Sir John Hartopp; and in the same year, was chosen assistant to Dr. Isaac Chauncy, pastor of the Independent Church in Mark Lane, London. Soon after his connection with Dr. Chauncy, in this capacity, his public labors were interrupted by a dangerous illness that continued five months; during which painful season, he learned that "patience in suffering was a part of christian duty no less important than activity in labor." On his recovery he immediately resumed his ministerial labors; and when Dr. Chauncy resigned his pastoral charge in 1702, he was chosen to succeed him. After serious deliberation he accepted the call, and addressed a letter to the congregation, from which the following is an extract :

"BRETHREN,—

" You know the constant aversion I have had to any proposal of a pastoral office, for these three years. You know, also, that since you have given me a unanimous call thereto, I have proposed

several methods for your settlement without me ; but your choice and your affections seemed to be still unmoved. I have objected my own indisposition of body ; and I have pointed to three divines, members of this church, whose gifts might render them more proper for instructors, and their age for government. These things I have urged till I have provoked you to sorrow and tears, and till I myself have been almost ashamed. But your perseverance in your choice, your constant profession of edification by my ministry, the great probability you show me of building up this famous and decayed church of Christ, and your prevailing fears of its dissolution if I refuse, have given me ground to believe that the voice of this church is the voice of Christ. And to answer this call I have not consulted with flesh and blood ; I have laid aside the thoughts of myself to serve the interest of our Lord. I have given up my own ease for your spiritual profit and your increase. I submit my inclination to my duty ; and in hopes of being made an instrument to build up this ancient church, I return this solemn answer to your call,—that, with a great sense of my own inability in mind and body to discharge the duties of so sacred an office, I do, in the strength of Christ, venture upon it ; and in His name I accept your call, promising in the presence of God and his saints, my utmost diligence in all the duties of a pastor, so far as God shall enlighten and strengthen me. And I leave that promise in the hands of Christ, our Mediator, to see it performed by me unto you, through the assistance of his grace and spirit."

It will be remembered that the church, to which Mr. Watts was now called, was the same of which the celebrated Dr. John Owen had formerly been pastor.

Shortly after his entrance upon his duties as sole pastor of this church, Mr. Watts was seized with a dangerous illness from which, after a long confinement, he but slowly recovered. So feeble was his health, at this period, that the congregation thought it necessary to provide an assistant ; and appointed the Rev. Samuel Price to that work, in 1703. The connection thus formed between Dr. Watts and Mr. Price continued more than forty years, and was re-

garded by each as a "peculiarly happy event." The sincerest friendship existed between them through life.

While gradually recovering his strength, he addressed the following letter to his sisters, Sarah and Mary Watts, which expresses, in simple and affectionate terms, the language of his heart.\*

"JUNE 15, 1704."

"DEAR SISTERS,

Read the love of my heart in the first line of my letter and believe it. I am much concerned to hear of my mother's continued weakness. We take our share in these painful disorders of nature, which afflict her whom we honor and love. I know also that your hurries of business must be more than doubled thereby; but we are daily leaving care and sin behind us. The past temptations shall vex us no more: the months which are gone return not, and the sorrows which we hourly feel lessen the decreed number. Every pulse beats a moment of pain away, and thus by degrees we arrive nearer to the sweet period of life and bliss.

Bear up, my dear ones, though the ruffling storms  
 Of a vain vexing world, tread down the cares,  
 Those ragged thorns which lie across the road,  
 Nor spend a tear upon them, Trust me, Sisters,  
 The dew of eyes will make the briers grow;  
 Nor let the distant phantom of delight  
 Too long allure your gaze or swell your hope  
 To dangerous size. If it approach your feet,  
 And court your hand, forbid th' intruding joy  
 To sit too near your heart. Still may our souls  
 Claim kindred with the skies, nor mix with dust  
 Our better-born affections, leave the globe  
 A nest for worms, and hasten to our home.  
 O, there are gardens of th' immortal kind,  
 Which crown the heavenly *Eden's* rising hills  
 With beauty and with sweets. No lurking mischief  
 Dwells in the fruit, nor serpent twines the boughs;  
 The branches bend laden with life and bliss

\* This letter, greatly enlarged, is inserted in the Lyric Poems. It is there addressed to Sarissa, his sister Sarah, probably after the death of his sister Mary.

Ripe for the taste, but 'tis a steep ascent;  
 Hold fast the golden chain\* let down from heaven,  
 'Twill help your feet and wings. I feel its force  
 Draw upward: fastened to the heavenly gate,  
 It guides the way unerring. Happy clue  
 Through this dark wild. "Twas wisdom's noblest work,  
 All join'd by pow'r divine, and every link is love.

"Sisters, Accept the sudden rapture kindly. The muse is not awake  
 every day. If she has a moment's release from the lethargy, see,  
 'tis devoted to serve and please you."——&c.

In 1705, at the age of thirty-one, Mr. Watts published his first work with the following title: "Horæ Lyricæ. Poems, chiefly of the Lyric kind; in three books: sacred to devotion and piety—to virtue, honor, and friendship—to the memory of the dead." This work, in the opinion of Dr. Johnson, entitled its author to an honorable place in the temple of the "English Poets." It was received with the highest favor, both in great Britain and America, and procured for the author the esteem and friendship of many eminent literary characters. Eight editions were issued before the death of the author.

There is much to admire, as well as to criticise, in the Lyric Poems; but on the whole, they exhibit a high order of merit, and few works on sacred poetry are more worthy of frequent perusal. They will long continue to delight the Christian on his way to immortality, and to elevate his views above the fugitive scenes of earth to the unending joys of heaven. In reviewing the Horæ Lyricæ, a modern critic has beautifully remarked,—"There are touches of poetry scattered through these pages, which, simple as childhood, are also as charming."† Many of the Lyric Poems are expressed in a glowing, copious, and elegant diction. As a choice specimen of their style, and of the pious sentiment which prevails through them, we offer a few lines.

The poem entitled, *Launching into Eternity*, is a good specimen of graceful, flowing rhythm, and appropriate imagery. We may

\* The gospel.

† Literary Gazette.

here observe that a number of the Lyric Poems are imitations of the odes of Casimire Sarbiewski, of Poland, whom Watts styles the noblest Latin poet of modern times.\*

It was a brave attempt! advent'rous he,  
Who in the first ship broke the unknown sea :  
And leaving his dear native shores behind,  
Trusted his life to the licentious wind.  
I see the surging brine : the tempest raves  
He on the pine-plank rides across the waves,  
Exulting on the edge of thousand gaping graves :  
He steers the winged boat, and shifts the sails,  
Conquers the flood, and manages the gales.

Such is the soul that leaves this mortal land,  
Fearless when the great Master gives command.  
Death is the storm : she smiles to hear it roar,  
And bids the tempest waft her from the shore :  
Then with a skilful helm she sweeps the seas,  
And manages the raging storm with ease ;  
(Her faith can govern death), she spreads her wings  
Wide to the wind, and as she sails she sings,  
And loses by degrees the sight of mortal things.  
As the shores lessen, so her joys arise,  
The waves roll gentler, and the tempest dies,  
Now vast eternity fills all her sight,  
She floats on the broad deep with infinite delight,  
The seas for ever calm, the skies for ever bright.

In his poem entitled, *A Song to creative Wisdom*, our poet soars on a lofty strain, and his flight is nobly sustained. The lines which we select are the most graceful, harmonious, and elevated.

Eternal Wisdom, thee we praise,  
Thee the creation sings ;  
With thy loud name, rocks, hills, and seas,  
And heaven's high palace rings.

\* Casimire was born in 1547. Grotius and D. Heinsius affirm him to be equal to Horace. He was so partial to Virgil, that he began to imitate him in an epic poem, called the "Lesicade," in twelve books, but his death at Warsaw, in 1690, prevented the completion of the work. His epigrams are much inferior to his odes. The best edition of his poems is that of Paris, in 1759.

Thy hand how wide it spread the sky,  
 How glorious to behold !  
 Ting'd with a blue of heavenly dye,  
 And starr'd with sparkling gold.

There thou hast bid the globes of light  
 Their endless circles run ;  
 There the pale planet rules the night,  
 And day obeys the sun.

The noisy winds stand ready there  
 Thy orders to obey :  
 With sounding wings they sweep the air,  
 To make thy chariot way.

There, like a trumpet, loud and strong,  
 Thy thunder shakes our coast :  
 While the red lightnings wave along,  
 The banners of thine host.

The poem on *Divine Judgments*, in Pindaric measure, is justly admired. We give the concluding lines which breathe the most exalted piety.

O for a message from above  
 To bear my spirit up !  
 Some pledge of my Creator's love,  
 To calm my terrors and support my hope !  
 Let waves and thunders mix and roar,  
 Be thou my God, and the whole world is mine :  
 While thou art Sov'reign, I'm secure ;  
 I shall be rich till thou art poor ;  
 For all I fear, and all I wish, heav'n, earth, and hell, are thine.

One of the most highly finished of the Lyric Poems is that on *God's Dominion and Decrees*, in the first book. It has been particularly admired for its sublimity of thought ; indeed, as Mr. Burder observes, nothing uninspired can be more sublime than this hymn, particularly from the seventh verse.

Keep silence, all created things,  
 And wait your Maker's nod :  
 The muse stands trembling while she sings  
 The honors of her God.

Life, death, and hell, and worlds unknown  
Hang on his firm decree:  
He sits on no precarious throne,  
Nor borrows leave to be.

Th' Almighty voice bid ancient night  
Her endless realm resign,  
And lo, ten thousand globes of light  
In fields of azure shine.

Now wisdom, with superior sway,  
Guides the vast moving frame,  
Whilst all the ranks of being pay  
Deep reverence to his name.

He spake; the sun obedient stood  
And held the falling day:  
Old Jordan backward drives his flood,  
And disappoints the sea.

Lord of the armies of the sky,  
He marshals all the stars;  
Red comets lift their banners high,  
And wide proclaim his wars.

Chained to his throne a volume lies,  
With all the fates of men,  
With every angel's form and size  
Drawn by the Eternal pen.

His Providence unfolds the book,  
And makes his counsels shine:  
Each opening leaf, and every stroke,  
Fulfils some deep design.

Here he exalts neglected worms  
To sceptres and a crown;  
Anon the following page he turns,  
And treads the monarch down.

Not Gabriel asks the reason why,  
Nor God the reason gives;  
Nor dares the favorite angel pry  
Between the folded leaves.

My God, I never longed to see  
 My fate with curious eyes,  
 What gloomy lines are writ for me,  
 Or what bright scenes shall rise.

In thy fair book of life and grace  
 May I but find my name,  
 Recorded in some humble place  
 Beneath my Lord the Lamb.

The success which attended the publication of the Lyric Poems induced Mr. Watts to prepare his *Hymns and Songs* for the press. They were first published in 1707, and have since been issued in numerous editions, and scattered by tens of thousands through the Christian world. They have cheered the heart of many a weary Christian pilgrim, when oppressed with the cares and sorrows of life, and “animated the praises of thousands on their dying beds.”\*

Many beautiful lines occur in the collection. What, for example, can be more soothing and cheering than the well-known stanza in the hymn entitled, *Christ's presence makes death easy*.

Jesus can make a dying bed,  
 Feel soft as downy pillows are,  
 While on his breast I lean my head,  
 And breathe my life out sweetly there.

This will recall to mind another verse of a similar nature, in the hymn entitled *The Song of Simeon; or, Death made desirable*. How often have these lines fallen, in accents of triumph, from the lips of the pious, in the last, solemn hour of life! How often have they made bright the dying eye, and cheered the departing soul!

\* The sufferer, to whom wearisome nights and days have been appointed, has been carried forward by gleams of future blessedness, which brighten upon the strains of Watts, in holy triumph and calm exultation, to the land where the weepers cease to weep; while thousands on the verge of death's dark river, have cheered surviving friends and sorrowing relatives, with tidings of the “sweet fields beyond the swelling flood,” which have “stilled its tossing, hushed its roar,” and which have broke upon their ravished vision as they entered into the joy of their Lord.—*Milner*.

Jesus, the vision of thy face  
 Hath overpowering charms,  
 Scarce shall I feel death's cold embrace  
 If Christ be in my arms.

In the hymn entitled, *The hope of heaven our support under trial on earth*, the poet has admirably hinted at the felicity of the ransomed soul when admitted into the Paradise of God.

There shall I bathe my weary soul  
 In seas of heavenly rest,  
 And not a wave of trouble roll  
 Across my peaceful breast.

Seldom has a poetical exclamation been more happily introduced than the one which occurs in the hymn on the *Characters of Christ, borrowed from inanimate things in Scripture*. These magnificent lines can hardly be repeated without thrilling the refined and pious mind.

O let me climb those higher skies,  
 Where storms and darkness never rise !  
 There he displays his powers abroad,  
 And shines and reigns th' incarnate God.

The last verse of the hymn from which we have just quoted contains two of the smoothest lines that have, perhaps, ever been penned. After recounting some of the glories of Christ's person the poet concludes thus :—

Nor earth, nor sea, nor sun, nor stars,  
 Nor heaven his full resemblance bears ;  
*His beauties we can never trace,*  
*Till we behold him face to face.*

Another verse, similar to this, in sweetness and smoothness, is found in the hymn entitled, *A vision of the Kingdom of Christ among men.*

*His own soft hand shall wipe the tears*  
*From every weeping eye,*  
 And pains, and groans, and griefs, and fears,  
 And death itself shall die.

Doddridge relates a striking instance of the effect produced by the use of one of the Hymns of Watts in public worship. In a letter to his friend, the author, he says—"I was preaching to a large assembly of plain country people, at a village, when, after a sermon from Hebrews vi. 12, we sung one of your hymns, (which, if I remember right, was the 140th of the second book,) and in that part of the worship, I had the satisfaction to observe tears in the eyes of several of the people: after the service was over, some of them told me that they were not able to sing, so deeply were their minds affected; and the clerk in particular said he could hardly utter the words as he gave them out." The hymn referred to is one of the finest in the collection.

Give me the wings of faith to rise  
 Within the veil, and see  
 The saints above, how great their joys,  
 How bright their glories be.

Once they were mourning here below,  
 And wet their couch with tears;  
 They wrestled hard as we do now,  
 With sins, and doubts, and fears.

I ask them whenee their victory came,  
 They, with united breath,  
 Ascribe their conquest to the Lamb,  
 Their triumph to his death.

They marked the footsteps that he trod,  
 (His zeal inspired their breast,)  
 And following their incarnate God,  
 Possess the promised rest.

Our glorious Leader claims our praise,  
 For him our pattern given,  
 While the long cloud of witnesses  
 Show the same path to Heaven.

On his recovery from the disease which attacked him in 1703, Mr. Watts continued to officiate as pastor, without any material interruption, till 1712, when he was seized with a violent fever which brought him to the brink of the grave, and left him in a

state of nervous debility, which, for some years, “incapacitated him for the functions of his office,” and from which he never entirely recovered.

It is pleasing to contemplate the happy and heavenly frame of mind that characterized this pious man amidst the afflictions he was called to endure. The following beautiful lines, which were penned during this severe and protracted illness, breathe the most exalted piety, and indicate a very calm and cheerful state of mind, such as the religion of Jesus alone can produce in afflictive circumstances.

Yet gracious God, amidst these storms of nature  
Thine eyes beheld a sweet and secret calm,  
Reign through the realms of conscience : All within  
Lies peaceful and composed. 'Tis wondrous grace  
Keeps off thy terrors from this humble bosom,  
Though stained with sins and follies, yet serene  
In penitential peace and cheerful hope,  
Sprinkled and guarded with atoning blood.  
Thy vital smiles, amidst this desolation,  
Like heavenly sun-beams hid behind the clouds,  
Break out in happy moments, with bright radiance  
Cleaving the gloom : the fair celestial light  
Softens and gilds the horrors of the storm,  
And richest cordials to the heart conveys.

O glorious solace of immense distress,  
A conscience and a God ! A friend at home,  
And better friend on high ! This is my rock  
Of firm support, my shield of sure defence  
Against infernal arrows. Rise, my soul,  
Put on thy courage : Here's the living spring  
Of joys divinely sweet and ever new,  
A peaceful conscience, and a smiling heaven.

These lines admirably display the peaceful, cheerful and submissive spirit of a Christian in seasons of affliction. Though he may be in the midst of sorrow and gloom, yet he can adopt the language of the sacred penmen—“Though I walk in the midst of trouble, thou wilt revive me : thou shalt stretch forth thy hand against the wrath of mine enemies, and thy right hand shall save me.—I will greatly rejoice in the Lord, my soul shall be joyful in my God ; for

he hath clothed me with the garments of salvation; he hath covered me with the robes of righteousness."

Watts was accustomed to remark—"I know not but my days of restraint and confinement by affliction may appear my brightest days, when I come to take a review of them in the light of heaven." In a letter to a minister in affliction, he has expressed similar feelings in the following beautiful and consoling terms.—"It is my hearty desire for you, that your faith may ride out the storms of temptations, and the anchor of your hope may hold, being fixed within the vail. There sits Jesus our forerunner, who sailed over this rough sea before us, and has given us a chart, even his word, where the shelves and rocks, the fierce currents and dangers, are well described; and he is our pilot, and will conduct us to the shores of happiness. I am persuaded, that in a future state we shall take a sweet review of those scenes of providence, which have been involved in the thickest darkness, and trace those footsteps of God when he walked with us through the deepest waters. This will be a surprising delight to survey the manifold harmony of clashing dispensations, and to have those perplexing riddles laid open to the eyes of our souls, and read the full meaning of them in set characters of wisdom and grace."

On his again recovering strength Mr. Watts composed a Hymn in which he acknowledges his gratitude to God for healing mercy.

What mortal voice,  
Or mortal hand, can render to my God  
The tribute due? What altars shall I raise?  
What grand inscription to proclaim his mercy  
In living lines? Where shall I find a victim  
Meet to be offered to his sovereign love,  
And solemnize the worship and the joy?

It is worthy of particular notice here that the illness of Mr. Watts in 1712, was the means of introducing him to Sir Thomas Abney. Invited by this gentleman to try the effect of a change of air at his house at Theobalds, he gladly complied with the request, and went there, intending to stay only a week: the remainder of his life, however,—a period of thirty-six years, was passed in the Abney family. This happy circumstance was, in the opinion of

Watts himself a sufficient compensation for all the sufferings he endnred in his painful illness. Thus often has it been found that sorrow is the mother of blessings.

It was a noble and generous principle which prompted Sir Thomas Abney to take Mr. Watts, in a very languishing state, to his own house, and supply him with all that could contribute to his comfort and enjoyment. An allusion to so generous and excellent an individual is very appropriate here. Sir Thomas Abney was a man of great wealth, commanding influence, and remarkable piety. It is stated that he was one of the wealthiest and most considerable persons attached to the dissenters, in whose principles he had been educated. King William knighted him; and he was elected sheriff of London and Middlesex in 1693; and also served the office of Lord Mayor of London in 1700. Of his scrupulous attention to his religious duties the following anecdote is related. On the evening of the day upon which he entered on the mayoralty, he withdrew "silently after supper from the public assembly at Guildhall, went to his own house, performed family worship there, and then returned to the company."

By the amiable and pious family of Sir Thomas Abney, Dr. Watts was ever treated with the utmost kindness "as a friend, attention as an invalid, and respect as a divine." His long and happy residence in this family is thus appropriately commented on by his first biographer, Dr. Gibbons—"Here, he enjoyed the uninterrupted demonstrations of the truest friendship. Here, without any cares of his own, he had every thing which could contribute to the enjoyment of life, and favor the unwearied pursuits of his studies. Here he dwelt in a family which, for piety, order, harmony, and every virtue, was a house of God. Here he had the privilege of a country recess, the fragrant bower, the spreading lawn, the flowery garden, and other advantages to soothe his mind, and aid his restoration to health; to yield him, whenever he chose them, most grateful intervals from his laborious studies, and enable him to return to them with redoubled vigor and delight. Had it not been for this happy event, he might, as to outward view, have feebly, it may be painfully, dragged on through many more years of languor and inability for public service, and even for profitable study; or

perhaps might have sunk into his grave, under the overwhelming load of infirmities, in the midst of his days: and thus the church and the world would have been deprived of those many excellent sermons and works which he drew up and published during his long residence in this family. In a few years after his coming hither, Sir Thomas Abney dies; but his amiable consort survives, who shows the Doctor the same respect and friendship as before: and most happily for him, and great numbers besides, (for as her riches were great, her generosity and munificence were in full proportion,) her thread of life was drawn out to a great age, even beyond that of the Doctor's. And thus this excellent man, through her kindness, and that of her daughter, Mrs. Elizabeth Abney, who in a like degree esteemed and honored him, enjoyed all the benefits and felicities he experienced at his first entrance into this family, till his days were numbered and finished, and, like a shock of corn in its season, he ascended into the regions of perfect and immortal life and joy."

After his coming to the family of Sir Thomas Abney, we have but little of interest to contemplate in the life of Watts, except a brilliant literary career. His life, like that of many other literary men, furnishes comparatively few novel or exciting biographical incidents for the narrator. In the language of Goldsmith, "The life of a scholar seldom abounds with adventure—his fame is acquired in solitude." In the Abney family, Watts continued to discharge his pastoral duties, with considerable interruption, however, till the close of his life. He was often unable to preach, and frequently, when he did appear in the pulpit, "his exertions were followed by such weakness and pain, that he was obliged to retire immediately to bed, and have his room closed in darkness and silence." In his delightful residence at Theobalds, while pursuing the even tenor of his way, he planned and executed a large number of his literary performances.

In 1719, he published his *Imitations of the Psalms of David*, of which four thousand copies were sold within the first year of their publication.

It is supposed to have been about this time that he produced his *Divine and Moral Songs for Children*, which have been "the

delight of infant minds from that day to the present, and probably will be for ages to come." A pious clergyman writes—"I have seen the sweet delight and joy with which they have been read by many of the young. On the hearts of five children in my own connections they have, by the blessing of God, made deep impressions; and one of these the other day died comfortably, repeating them within a few minutes before his departure." Numerous other examples of a similar nature might be cited if our limits permitted.

There is a rich vein of poetry running through these songs; and they have been long and justly admired for their intrinsic merits. "They present the happiest specimen, in any language, of religion and morality recommended to the infant mind through the medium of verse. The diction is familiar and elegant, without being either too common or refined; and the imagery is wisely chosen from objects and scenes continually before the eye. In this manner has the writer obtained for himself a place in our hearts, among the most cherished remembrances of childhood. *The bee, that hums by us on the summer grass, recalls him to the memory; and we can not think upon our mothers without recollecting Watts.*"\*

The success of these *Songs* has been wonderful. They have attained an immense circulation, and are admired wherever they are known. "The number of copies that have been circulated throughout the world, must amount to many millions; upwards of thirty editions, in this country [England] are regularly kept in print; and upon a moderate computation, the average annual sale in England only can not be less than eighty thousand. It was stated some years ago, upon authority, that two institutions, the Society for Promoting Religious Knowledge among the Poor, and the Religious Tract Society, had distributed upwards of one hundred thousand."†

In a specimen of moral songs appended to the collection, we have a very fine poem on *A Summer Evening*, which we are happy to introduce in this sketch. It deserves to live in the memory of every Christian. So much admired was this poem, that its

\* Willmott's Lives of the English Sacred Poets.

† Milner's Life and Times of Watts.

author was asked by his biographer, Dr. Gibbons, why he did not include it in his Lyric Poems ? to which he replied, that it was not composed when that work was published.

How fine has the day been ! how bright was the sun !  
 How lovely and joyful the course that he run !  
 Though he rose in a mist when his race he begun,  
     And there followed some droppings of rain !  
 But now the fair traveler's come to the West,  
 His rays are all gold, and his beauties are best ;  
 He paints the sky gay as he sinks to his rest,  
     And foretells a bright rising again.

Just such is the Christian : his course he begins,  
 Like the sun, in a mist, when he mourns for his sins,  
 And melts into tears : then he breaks out and shines,  
     And travels his heavenly way ;  
 But when he comes nearer to finish his race,  
 Like a fine-setting sun he looks richer in grace,  
 And gives a sure hope at the end of his days,  
     Of rising in brighter array.

In 1721, Mr. Watts published the first volume of his sermons ; and, in dedicating them to his congregation, he forcibly remarks : " You know it has always been the business of my ministry to convince and persuade your souls into practical godliness, by the clearest and strongest reasons derived from the gospel, and by all the most moving methods of speech of which I was capable ; but still in an humble subserviency to the promised influences of the Holy Spirit. I ever thought it my duty to press the conviction with force on the conscience, when light was first let into the mind. A statue hung round with moral sentences, or a marble pillar with divine truths inscribed upon it, may preach coldly to the understanding, while devotion freezes at the heart : but the prophets and apostles were *burning and shining lights* ; they were all taught by inspiration to make the words of truth glitter like sunbeams, and to operate like a *hammer*, and a *fire*, and a *two-edged sword*.\* The movements of sacred passion may be the ridicule of an age which pretends to nothing but calm reasoning. Life and zeal in the min-

\* 2 Cor. iv. 4—6 ; John, v. 35 ; Jer. xxii. 29 ; Heb. iv. 12.

istry of the word may be despised by men of lukewarm and dying religion : *fervency of spirit in the service of the Lord,\** may become the scoff and jest of the critic and the profane : but this very life and zeal, this sacred fervency, shall still remain one bright character of a Christian preacher, till the names of Paul and Apollos perish from the church ; and that is, till this Bible and these heavens are no more."

The sermons of Dr. Watts, notwithstanding their occasional redundancy of expression, and prolixity in arrangement, have always enjoyed a high place in the literature of the pulpit. They abound in glowing exhibitions of evangelical truth, happy illustrations of their subject, and striking appeals to the conscience. Few sermons are more deserving of frequent or careful perusal ; and we trust that the Christian reader will not fail to make himself familiar with them. They are admirably adapted to promote the grand end of preaching—the exhibition of Christ, and Him crucified. They are, indeed, full of the precious consolations of the glorious gospel, and shine "with a mild and comforting light, that warms while it brightens."

Mr. Burder has thus very appropriately characterized the discourses of Dr. Watts :—"In reviewing them, it may be justly remarked, that they possess uncommon excellence, and in some respects, notwithstanding the many volumes of sermons since published, have never been exceeded, or even equalled. The beautiful perspicuity and simplicity of their style render them familiar to the meanest capacities. Their originality of thought, and the happy illustrations that abound in them, discover the genius of the writer ; but the fervor of his exhortations, his close addresses to the conscience, and the rich veins of evangelical truth and Christian experience in every discourse, show the Christian divine in full proportion."†

Under the title of "Death and Heaven," Mr. Watts published, in 1722, his excellent funeral discourses in memory of Sir John and Lady Hartopp. They appeared from the press in a considerably enlarged form. Immediately on their publication, they received

\* Acts xviii. 25 ; Rom. xii. 11.

† Memoirs of Watts, prefixed to the London edition of his works.

the highest commendation of the Christian public, and, at once, became a favorite with many pious readers. They may justly be placed among the choicest theological productions of their author.\* The celebrated Prof. Frank, of Germany, was so much pleased with them that he procured a translation into the German language; and his successor, in the professorship of divinity, Dr. Rambach wrote a highly commendatory notice of the work, in which he says:—"Though the first sermon contains many elegant passages worthy to be read, yet the latter seems to be a more elaborate piece, because it sets the doctrine of eternal life in a greater light, and enriches it with many probable inferences drawn from the word of God. He proposes his excellent thoughts in most emphatical terms, in that beautiful order, and with such a vivacity of style, that he keeps the reader in a continual attention, and an eager desire to read on. It is plain the author's mind was so taken up with the beauty of heaven, that *his mouth could not but speak from the abundance of his heart*. There is a secret unction in his expressions, which leaves a sweet savor in the reader's heart, and raises in him a desire after the blessed society he speaks of. And though the reader should not entirely agree with the author's notions, yet he will not peruse this treatise without a particular edification and blessing. I can not deny but the author's conjectures may be sometimes carried a little too far, but that doth not prejudice the subject in the least. Besides, he is generally so happy as to find some arguments for his probable notions in the word of God, and to answer very dexterously all the objections that can be made against him.

" May the ever-living God give a blessing to this work, and

\* Both of Watts' sermons abound with passages of considerable beauty; a vein of ardent piety runs throughout; the style is more than usually sprightly and vivacious; the fancy of the writer is evidently on the wing, and his imagination excursive, yet it does not attract from the highway of truth, nor betray into error and inconsistence. It has, indeed, been objected that some of his views of the station, employment, and happiness of perfected spirits are not expressly sanctioned by the sacred page; yet they harmonize with the general tenor of its brief and brilliant revelations, and are certainly supported by the inferential evidence of the Scriptures.—*Milner's Life and Times of Watts.*

grant that those sweet and relishing truths proposed in these leaves may make such an impression upon the minds of the readers as those noble truths deserve. May he prevent all the abuse of this delightful subject, and never permit it to be turned into a mere dry or fruitless speculation ; but may he inflame every reader with a holy desire after a blessed eternity, and rouse and excite all those that have not begun yet to tread the path of Salvation, to enter into the same without delay, that they may not rest in a mere delightful prospect of the land of Canaan, nor be for ever excluded by their unbelief from the eternal enjoyment of it."

In the year 1722, Mr. Watts also published his work on *The Christian Doctrine of the Trinity*,—a production of much merit. It presents an able defense of the doctrine of the Trinity, and is almost entirely free from those heterodox opinions which characterize some of the author's later publications on the same subject.

In 1723, he published a second volume of sermons on the Christian Morals, which are among the best ever written on the subject, and worthy of the careful perusal of every professor of Christianity.

In 1724, appeared his *Treatise on Logic*, which met with a favorable reception, and was soon introduced as a text-book into the University of Oxford, and other literary Institutions. Lord Barrington, who highly prized the work, remarked—"I intend, as some have done Erasmus, or a piece of Cicero—to read it over once a year."

In 1725, Mr. Watts produced his *Elements of Geography and Astronomy*, which, in consequence of the rapid advances in the knowledge of those sciences, may now be numbered among the least important of his publications.

In 1728, he received the honorary degree of Doctor of Divinity from the Universities of Edinburgh and Aberdeen. "Academical honors," in the language of Dr. Johnson, "would have more value, if they were always bestowed with equal judgment."

About this time, Dr. Watts published his Catechisms which are so favorably known wherever the English language is spoken. In mentioning his prose and poetical compositions for children, Dr. Johnson observes with admiration ;—"He condescended to lay

aside the scholar, the philosopher, and the wit, to write little poems of devotion, and systems of instruction, adapted to their wants and capacities, from the dawn of reason through its gradations of advance in the morning of life. Every man acquainted with the common principles of human action, will look with veneration on the writer, who is at one time combating Locke, and at another time making a catechism for children in their fourth year. A voluntary descent from the dignity of science is perhaps the hardest lesson that humility can teach."

In 1730, Dr. Watts published his work entitled, *A Short View of the Whole Scripture History*, written in the form of question and answer,—an interesting book which should be placed in the hands of young persons. Lord Barrington, in a letter to the author, speaks of it as "a book very instructive and entertaining to people of all ages and conditions," and adds, that he will keep a copy in his "nursery, hall, and parlor."

In 1731, appeared another useful publication of Dr. Watts, entitled, *An Humble Attempt towards the revival of Practical Religion among Christians*. The first part of this treatise,—which is by far the more valuable,—is a serious exhortation to ministers. It was prepared for the ordination of Rev. John Oakes; but was not delivered, in consequence of the illness of Dr. Watts on the day appointed for that purpose. This address we regard as a very choice and appropriate one. It can not be too strongly commended to the attention of every theological student and clergyman. The remaining portion of the work contains the substance of several discourses delivered to his congregation in London, and designed particularly for the use of the dissenters.

Another publication in the year 1731, was his *Essay on the Strength and Weakness of Human Reason*. He manages the discussion of this subject, in the opinion of Dr. Johnson, with his usual ability and tact.

His *Philosophical Essays on various Subjects*; and his *System of Ontology*, were published in 1733; and in the following year, appeared his third volume of sermons, and an admirable little work entitled, *Miscellaneous Thoughts, in Prose and Verse*. We would call the special attention of the young reader to these *Thoughts*,

many of which are highly beautiful, and well calculated to afford a person of fine taste and genuine piety, rich entertainment and instruction. In specifying some of the choicest of them, we would include those pieces on, Distant Thunder—Meditation for the first of May—Divine Goodness in the Creation—The Midnight Elevation,—and Searching after God. The last mentioned essay contains a fine specimen of sacred poetry which the Christian may repeat with renewed admiration. What can be more easy in style, or sublime in thought, than these lines in which the pious author soars in almost inimitable strains ?

My God, I love and I adore :  
But souls that love would know thee more.  
Wilt thou for ever hide, and stand  
Behind the labors of thy hand ?  
Thy hand unseen sustains the poles,  
On which this huge creation rolls :  
The starry arch proclaims thy pow'r,  
Thy pencil glows in ev'ry flow'r :  
In thousand shapes and colors rise  
Thy painted wonders to our eyes ;  
While beasts and birds with lab'ring throats,  
Teach us a God in thousand notes.  
The meanest pin in nature's frame,  
Marks out some letter of thy name.  
Where sense can reach or fancy rove,  
From hill to hill, from field to grove,  
Across the waves, around the sky,  
There's not a spot, or deep, or high,  
Where the Creator has not trod,  
And left the footsteps of a God.

Probably in 1735, Dr. Watts published his excellent treatise,—*The Redeemer and Sanctifier* ;—a small volume which may be studied with profit.

The year 1736, was to him a season of painful illness, as we learn from a beautiful poem in the *Remnants of Time* ;—“ Complaint and hope under great pain, 1736.” In what a sweet and tender strain are these lines expressed ! And who can read them without emotion ?

Lord, I am pain'd ; but I resign  
 To thy superior will :  
 'Tis grace, 'tis wisdom all divine  
 Appoints the pains I feel.

Dark are thy ways of providence,  
 While those that love thee groan :  
 Thy reasons lie concealed from sense,  
 Mysterious and unknown.

Yet nature may have leave to speak,  
 And plead before her God,  
 Lest the o'er-burden'd heart should break  
 Beneath thy heavy rod.

Will nothing but such daily pain  
 Secure my soul from hell ?  
 Canst thou not make my health attain  
 Thy kind designs as well ?

How shall my tongue proclaim thy grace  
 While thus at home confined ?  
 What can I write, while painful flesh  
 Hangs heavy on the mind ?

These groans and sighs, and flowing tears  
 Give my poor spirit ease,  
 While every groan my Father hears,  
 And every tear he sees.

Is not some smiling hour at hand  
 With peace upon its wings ?  
 Give it, O God, thy swift command,  
 With all the joys it brings.

We may here observe that some of the most affecting lines Dr. Watts ever wrote flowed from his pen during seasons of affliction.

In 1736, or the year following, the death of Dr. Watts's father occurred. He had come to his grave in "a full age, like as a shock of corn cometh in in his season." Two days before this event the poet addressed to his venerable parent the following beautiful letter, which will be read with interest :

"HONORED AND DEAR SIR,

"Tis now ten days since I heard from you, and learned by my nephew that you had been recovered from a very threatening illness. When you are in danger of life, I believe my sister is afraid to let me know the worst, for fear of affecting me too much. But as I feel old age daily advancing on myself,\* I am endeavoring to be ready for my removal hence: and though it gives a shock to nature, when what has been long dear to one is taken away, yet reason and religion should teach us to expect it, in these scenes of mortality, and a dying world. Blessed be God for our immortal hopes through the blood of Jesus, who has taken away the sting of death! What could such dying creatures do without the comfort of the Gospel? I hope you feel those satisfactions of soul on the borders of life, which nothing can give but this Gospel, which you taught us all in our younger years. May these divine consolations support your spirits, under all your growing infirmities, and may our blessed Saviour form your soul to such a holy heavenly frame, that you may wait with patience amidst the languors of life, for a joyful passage into the Land of Immortality. May no cares nor pains ruffle nor afflict your spirit. May you maintain a constant serenity at heart, and sacred calmness of mind, as one who has long passed midnight, and is in view of the dawning day! The night is far spent, the day is at hand. Let the garments of light be found upon us, and let us lift up our heads, for our redemption draws nigh. Amen."

In 1737, Dr. Watts published his admirable treatise on *Humility, as exemplified in the Character of St. Paul*; and two years afterwards, appeared one of his most useful and important publications;—*The World to Come; or discourses on the joys or sorrows of departed souls at death, and the glory or terror of the resurrection*. This work contains sermons preached on different occasions. The invaluable discourse on the "End of Time" has been translated into most European languages, and often printed separately as a tract. The whole work is full of rich, evangelical instruction, touching pathos, and solemn appeal. It is admirably

\* Dr. Watts was now in his sixty-third year.

calculated to alarm the unconverted, arouse the indifferent, and animate the believer. The author sets forth, in the most impressive manner, the joys and sorrows of the world to come, and calls upon us, in forcible language, to choose the path of life, and avoid that of death. This book has cheered the last hours of many a timid Christian pilgrim, by its transporting exhibitions of the sublime joys that await the believer in mansions of glory; when brought to dwell for ever with Immanuel, in whose presence is fullness of joy; at whose right hand are pleasures for evermore.

In relation to this work Dr. Coleman, of Boston, wrote to the author, as follows:—"I think you never wrote, nor did I ever read, discourses more adapted to young and old, high and low. In such a frame one would wish to expire: I am ready to say on it, It is finished—yet may you live to add more."

In 1741, Dr. Watts published the first part of his treatise on *The Improvement of the Mind*; a book, which, as the author informs us, had been the labor of twenty years.\* This work, which has met with such universal approbation, is, perhaps, the most useful production of the kind in the English language. Two of the most eminent critics of their age have expressed very favorable opinions of its merits. Says Dr. Johnson:—"Few books have been perused by me with greater pleasure than his 'Improvement of the Mind,' of which the radical principles may, indeed, be found in Locke's 'Conduct of the Understanding'; but they are so expanded and ramified by Watts, as to confer upon him the merit of a work in the highest degree useful and pleasing. Whoever has the care of instructing others may be charged with deficiency in his duty if this book is not recommended." The celebrated Robert Hall, with his characteristic modesty, gives the following estimate:—"I very highly approve of Dr. Watts' works in general, and particularly that on the 'Improvement of the Mind.' The book needs no recommendation; it may be considered as an English classic, which it would be nearly as absurd for any living author to recommend, as the papers of Addison, or the poetry of Milton. It has already received the most distinguished applause from Johnson, in

\* The second part, which is inferior to the first, was left in manuscript, and published by the editors of his works, Drs. Jennings and Doddridge.

the most popular of all his works. This applause is fresh in the mind of every man of reading. What consummate vanity would it betray in me, to add my recommendation to a work which has received the imprimatur of that great dictator in the republic of letters!"

Such are some of the principal works of Dr. Watts, with the date of their publication. There are a few of his writings whose precise date of publication can not now be ascertained, such as his *Essay on the Ruin and Recovery of Mankind*; his *Discourses on the Passions*, which form one of the best philosophical essays on that subject in our language; and his *Discourses on the Love of God*, which are among the choicest of his productions. They are written in a glowing and perspicuous style, and abound in beautiful and soul-stirring passages.

His *Remnants of Time Employed, in Prose and Verse*, published since his decease, deserve commendation. Like his *Miscellaneous Thoughts*, they contain many delightful sentiments. In the *Essay on Redemption*, we have a verse which, for its beauty and sublimity will ever be admired by the lovers of sacred poetry. After composing several pleasing lines on his lofty theme, the author adds:—"If I could pursue all the wondrous achievements of a dying and a risen Saviour in verse, as fast and as far as my thoughts sometimes attempt to trace them, I should lengthen this ode to many stanzas, and yet at last I should lose both my thoughts and my verse amongst the unknown wonders of his glory, and the ages of eternity.

Who shall fulfill this boundless song?  
What vain pretender dares?  
The theme surmounts an angel's tongue,  
And Gabriel's harp despairs.

In the spring of 1739, Dr. Watts was seized with a paralytic attack, which, probably, in some degree, impaired his intellectual powers, and from which he but slowly recovered.

His latest publications were on the Trinitarian controversy. His work entitled, "The Glory of Christ as God-man, displayed in three Discourses," which was published towards the close of 1746, when he was over seventy years of age, was among his last literary per-

formances for the press. In this work he strongly advances his fanciful scheme of the pre-existence of Christ's human soul. It has been well said that Watts studied the doctrine of the Trinity, as some Indian devotees are said to have contemplated the sun, till their own sight was darkened.\*

The last illness of Dr. Watts is said to have been rather a decay of nature, worn out by infirmity and labor, than any particular disease. He ceased to breathe on the 25th of November, 1748, in the 75th year of his age. Calmly and peacefully, and "in sure and certain hope" of a glorious immortality did his weary, longing spirit leave its feeble earthly tenement, and wing its way to God. Among his last expressions were the following. He was often heard to say,—“I bless God I can lie down with comfort at night, not being solicitous whether I wake in this world or another.”—“I should be glad to read more, yet not in order to be confirmed more on the truth of the Christian religion, or in the truth of its promises, for I believe them enough to venture an eternity on them.”—“I would be waiting to see what God will do with me. It is good to say as Mr. Baxter, ‘What, when, and where God pleases.’ If God should raise me up again I may finish some more of my papers, or God can make use of me to save a soul, and that will be worth living for. If God has no more service for me to do, through grace, I am ready. It is a great mercy to me that I have no manner of fear or dread of death: I could, if God please, lay my head back and die without terror, this afternoon or night. My chief supports are from my view of eternal things, and the interest I have in them: I have no fear of dying; it would be my greatest comfort to lie down and sleep and wake no more.” When he found his spirit tending to impatience, and ready to repine at the afflictive dispensations of Providence, he would thus restrain him-

\* Happy had it been for him, if he, who humbled his mind to the composition of songs and spelling-books for children, had applied to his own case our Saviour's words, and in this instance become as a little child himself! Happy had it been, because, during the whole course of his innocent, and otherwise most peaceful life, he seems never to have been assailed by any other temptation than this of the intellect, never to have been beset with any other troubles than those in which his own subtlety entangled him.

—*Dr. Southey's Memoir of Watts.*

self,—“The business of a Christian is to *bear* the will of God as well as to *do* it. If I were in health I could only be doing that, and that I may do now. The best thing in obedience is a regard to the will of God, and the way to that is to get our inclinations and aversions as much mortified as we can.” Having mentioned the observation of an aged minister, how “the most learned and knowing Christians, when they come to die, have only the same plain promises of the gospel for their support, as the common and unlearned,”—he added, “and so I find it. It is the plain promises of the gospel that are my support; and I bless God that they are plain promises, that do not require much labor and pains to understand them; for I can do nothing now but look into my Bible for some promise to support me, and live upon that.” Thus sustained in the last hour of his earthly pilgrimage, the pious Watts cheerfully resigned his spirit into the hands of his Creator. And in contemplating such a happy, death-bed scene, we may truly say:—

“The chamber where the good man meets his fate,  
Is privileged beyond the common walk of virtuous life  
Quite on the verge of heaven.”

Dr. Watts, though not seemingly insensible to female charms, was never married. In early life he is said to have formed an attachment for the amiable, accomplished, and talented Miss Elizabeth Singer, afterwards the celebrated Mrs. Rowe. Dr. Colman, of Boston, who was personally acquainted with this lady, as well as with Dr. Watts, used to relate an anecdote which would show that the attachment was mutual. According to his statement, Watts, after considerable procrastination, at length ventured to declare his attachment to Miss Singer, and to solicit her hand in marriage. The answer she gave must have been extremely mortifying to him. She replied that she had long been expecting his addresses, but, on the preceding day, had given her consent to the solicitation of Mr. Rowe. Dr. Watts never formed a second attachment. We may add that the sincerest friendship existed between him and Mrs. Rowe through life; and that, on the sudden death of the latter in 1737, a letter—one of the last of her literary

performances—was found in her cabinet, addressed to him, accompanied by the manuscript of her “Devout Exercises” for revision.

Our limits will permit only a brief delineation of the character of Dr. Watts. Some of his most prominent qualities, however, will be mentioned.

1. In his physical conformation, he can not be said to have been as highly favored as many others. He measured only about five feet in height, and was of a slender form. His complexion was pale and fair, his eyes small and gray, but when animated, became piercing and expressive; his forehead was low, his cheek bones rather prominent; but his countenance was, on the whole, by no means disagreeable. His voice was pleasant, but weak. A stranger would, probably, have been most attracted by his piercing eye whose very glance was able to command attention and awe.

An anecdote, in relation to his diminutive and unprepossessing appearance may here be repeated. On one occasion, when he happened to be in a hotel with some friends, a gentleman asked rather contemptuously,—“What! is that the *great* Dr. Watts?” Over-hearing the question, Dr. Watts immediately turned towards him, and repeated the following lines from his Lyric Poems, which are said to have produced a silent admiration,—

Were I so tall to reach the pole,  
Or grasp the ocean with my span,  
I must be measured by my soul,  
The mind’s the standard of the man.

2. Though not distinguished for any great oratorical powers, yet Dr. Watts possessed many excellences as a preacher. In the pulpit he made use of little gesture, and was seldom vehement, but still there was a peculiar charm about his discourses, which rendered them effective, and secured a crowded congregation.\* His great excellence may be said to have consisted in an earnest and solemn manner, remarkable freedom of address, a correct enuncia-

\* His sermons had all the advantages that could be given them, by an impressive elocution, and a manner of delivery which with curious felicity seems to have been at the same time elaborately studied, yet earnestly sincere.—*Dr. Southey.*

tion, an easy style, an elegant taste, a glowing exhibition of divine truth, and a serious appeal to the conscience. At the close of his more weighty sentences, he was in the habit of making a short pause, in order to produce a deeper impression upon his hearers, by affording them an opportunity for reflection. In his preparation for the pulpit, he wrote only the heads and particulars of his discourses; and in delivering them, was but little confined to his notes.\*

3. With regard to his style of composition, we may observe that it is remarkable for its perspicuity. This has ever been regarded as the first excellence of writing or speaking. "Perspicuity," says Quintilian, "is the first excellence in oratory; and by how much a person is deficient in genius, by so much let him endeavor to elevate and enlarge himself by this beauty of language."†

An easy style is also an attainment of great excellence; and the writings of Dr. Watts fully evince that he was master of such a style. It has been admirably said that his discourses are like streams flowing from a mountain, or rays descending from the sun. There is nothing like labor or study in the construction of his sentences, but he seems to write in the same language in which he would have spoken to you.

Some of his other prominent qualities as a writer may be enumerated, such as dignity, harmony, ardor, copiousness of ideas, originality of thought, and a happy mode of describing or illustrating his subject. The merit of a graceful writer has been awarded to him by Dr. Johnson. "He was one of the first authors that taught the Dissenters to court attention by the graces of language. Whatever they had among them before, whether of learning or acuteness, was commonly obscured and blunted by coarseness and inelegance of style. He showed them, that zeal and purity might be expressed and enforced by polished diction."

\* It is no wonder that a man so richly furnished with gifts and graces, was an admired preacher: when he spoke, such strains of truly Christian eloquence flowed from his lips, and these so apparently animated with zeal for God and the most tender concern for souls and their everlasting salvation, as one would think could not be easily slighted or resisted.—*Dr. Jennings.*

† *Institutes of Oratory, 1, 2, & 3.*

The principal faults of his style consist in redundant phrases, and in the use of some expressions not exactly agreeable to the critical taste of the present age.\*

4. He possessed a fertile genius, a lofty imagination, a ready conception, a retentive memory, and a mind amply stored with the rich treasures of human and divine learning. It has been beautifully remarked, that he had the copious and heavenly knowledge of the divine, the clear perception and patient thinking of the philosopher, and the rich imagination and sublime rapture of the poet.

The versatility of his genius and the variety of his attainments have excited unqualified admiration. "His soul was too large and noble to be confined within narrow limits. He could not be content to leave any path of learning untried, nor to rest in total ignorance of any science, the knowledge of which might be for his own improvement, or might in any way tend to enlarge his capacity of being useful to others. Hence, he investigated theology in all its branches—he examined nature in all her works—and he pursued philosophy in her profoundest mysteries. He has written for childhood, youth, maturity, and hoary hairs—he has instructed the sage, the Christian, and the 'multitude who keep holy days'—he has benefitted all ages, and been taught to speak in almost all languages."†

5. He was, through life, a most diligent and successful student, and a devout admirer of the works of nature. He loved to contemplate the power, wisdom, and goodness of the Deity, as displayed in the manifold works of creation; while he always looked, with the eye of a Christian philosopher, "through nature" up to nature's God.

The acquisition of knowledge seems to have been the one grand object which he constantly kept in view. Few persons have sought after learning with greater avidity, or improved to better advantage the golden hours of life. His industry, in this respect, was truly

\* His style is harmonious, florid, poetical, and pathetic;—but too diffuse, too many words,—especially in his later works,—and his former are too much loaded with epithets.—Yet on the whole he is an excellent writer.—All that he has written is well worth reading.—*Doddridge*.

† Milner's Life and Times of Watts.

indefatigable. "In his study, his delightful recess, his terrestrial paradise, he was always enlarging his stores of knowledge, or preparing them for a communication to the world. His conversation was such as in all respects became the man of wisdom, the man of God. His observations on others were deep and penetrating, and it is probable their excellence or defects furnished him with hints for several papers in his *Miscellanies* in which the different characters of mankind are delineated, but so as to guard against any personal offense in a single instance. When he went abroad among the scenes of rural verdure, beauty and fruitfulness, like the bee in its industrious ranges for celestial sweets, he was solicitous to gather fresh food for heavenly contemplation, or fresh materials and ornaments for future compositions. The pastures covered with flocks and herds, the fields waving with the ripening harvests, the groves resounding with the melody of the birds enlivened his praises, and he saw, heard, and confessed his God in all. The skies by day struck his soul with admiration of the immense power, wisdom, and goodness of their divine Author; the moon, and starry train by night increased his conceptions of Deity; and, in the open manuscript of God, the wide extended heavens, he read the letters of his great and wonderful name with profound homage and veneration. All that met his eye or ear was laid, as it were, under a perpetual tribute to yield him improvement, and consecrate and enrich his moments of leisure and necessary cessation from his studies; and in short, nature was only a scale to his devout soul by which to ascend to the knowledge and adoration of God."\*

6. As a poet, he has been highly applauded. If his life had been devoted to the cultivation of his poetical talents, he would, probably, have occupied the front rank among the most illustrious poets of the world. But it must be remembered, in estimating his poetical character, that he studied the art of poetry, principally, as the amusement of a man of letters. His chief excellencies consist in his great variety of powers, his originality of conception, and his admirable skill in design; while the principal errors in some of his poems, are a faulty versification, inelegant construction, and prosaic phraseology. Cowper, who was an ardent admirer of his poetry,

\* Gibbon's *Memoirs* of Watts.

considered him to be endowed with true poetical ability; careless, indeed, and for the most part inattentive to those niceties which constitute elegance of expression, but frequently sublime in his conceptions, and masterly in his execution. And Dr. Johnson says: "His judgment was exact, and he noted beauties and faults with very nice discernment; his imagination, as the 'Dacian Battle' proves, was vigorous and active, and the stores of knowledge were large by which his fancy was to be supplied. His ear was well tuned, and his diction was elegant and copious."

But the same critic fails to appreciate the beauties of religious poetry; for, in relation to the pious strains of Watts, he singularly, adds: "His devotional poetry is, like that of others, unsatisfactory. The paucity of its topics enforces perpetual repetition, and the sanctity of the matter rejects the ornaments of figurative diction.\* It is sufficient for Watts to have done better than others what no man has done well." These remarks of Johnson have often been controverted, and ably refuted. They are most satisfactorily disproved by Milner, in his *Life and Times of Watts*. "The objection advanced against sacred poetry," he remarks, "on account of the 'paucity of its topics,' may be satisfactorily refuted by every Christian, who examines into his own experience, unfolds the volume of revelation, and looks abroad upon the fields of nature. Instead of religion being confined and limited in its range, it embraces as many subjects as the rays of light that are continually streaming around us, or the moments that compose the sum total of our existence. To the man of contemplative piety, the whole visible creation becomes one great temple; to him the floods clap their hands; the trees of the field rejoice and are glad; and the mountains break forth into singing, in adoration of the supreme Intelligence. Every sun that shines, and every star that twinkles—every forest that waves, and every ocean that roars—every mountain that rises, and every valley that sweeps—leads him to the Creator's footstool; and from every part of the earth's surface, there ascends, to the eye of faith, a mystic ladder reaching up to heaven, and the 'Lord God is above it.' As Watts beautifully sings in one of his Lyrics:

\* Johnson seems to have forgotten, as Dr. Southey well observes, that of all poetry, inspired poetry is the most figurative.

What are my eyes, but aids to see  
The glories of the Deity  
Inscrib'd with beams of light  
On flowers and stars?—

\* \* \* \* \*

“If from the book of nature we turn to the book of God, the marvels of near six thousand years are presented to our attention, each bearing a sacred impress, supplying an infinite variety of subjects, adapted to the epic, tragic, and sentimental muse. Religion embraces all the perfections and works of Deity—creation, providence, and redemption—angelic visitations to the tents of eastern patriarchs—the incarnation, life, miracle, death, and resurrection of Christ—the gorgeous visions which flit like shadows in the mysterious twilight of the Apocalypse—the solemnities of universal judgment—the glorious heights of heaven—and the dark abysses of the unfathomed pit. The Bible must become a sealed book to the Christian, the memory of his own experience fly forgotten as a dream, and the bright and beautiful world become a blank, before he can complain of the paucity of devotional topics.”

7. Above all, Dr. Watts will ever be distinguished for his fervent and exalted piety. His piety was conspicuously manifested in his daily walk and conversation; and it glows on almost every page of his works. It has attracted the particular notice of the great English critic. “The truth is,” says Johnson, “that whatever he took in hand was, by his incessant solicitude for souls, converted to Theology. As piety predominated in his mind, it is diffused over his works: under his direction it may be truly said, *Theologiæ Philisophia ancillatur*, philosophy is subservient to evangelical instruction: it is difficult to read a page without learning, or at least wishing, to be better. The attention is caught by indirect instruction, and he that sat down only to reason is on a sudden compelled to pray.”

In concluding our brief review of the life, character, and writings of the eminently pious Watts, we would add the beautiful encomiums of two good judges. In the language of his first biographer, Dr. Gibbons;—“Perhaps very few of the descendants of Adam have made nearer approaches to angels in intellectual powers and divine

dispositions than Dr. Watts; and among the numerous stars which have adorned the hemisphere of the Christian Church he has shone and will shine an orb of the first magnitude."

Dr. Vicesimus Knox, so favorably known in the republic of letters, thus expresses himself, in his *Christian Philosophy*:—"For my own part, I can not but think this good man approached as nearly to Christian perfection as any mortal ever did in this sublunary state; and, therefore, I consider him as a better interpreter of the Christian doctrine than the most learned critics, who, proud of their reason and their learning, despised or neglected the very life and soul of Christianity, the living, everlasting Gospel, the supernatural influence of divine grace: and be it ever remembered, that Dr. Watts was a man who studied the abstrusest sciences, and was as well qualified to become a verbal critic, or a logical disputant on the Scriptures, as the most learned among the doctors of the Sorboune, or the greatest proficients in polemical divinity. I mention this circumstance for the consideration of those who insinuate that the doctrines of grace can not be entertained but by ignorant, as well as fanatical persons, by persons uninitiated in the mysteries of philosophy."



C H O I C E   W O R K S

OF

ISAAC WATTS, D.D.

# DEATH AND HEAVEN;

OR,

THE LAST ENEMY CONQUERED, AND SEPARATE  
SPIRITS MADE PERFECT:

WITH AN ACCOUNT OF

THE RICH VARIETY OF THEIR EMPLOYMENTS AND PLEASURES:

ATTEMPTED IN TWO FUNERAL DISCOURSES, IN MEMORY  
OF SIR JOHN HARTOOPP AND HIS LADY.

## DISCOURSE I.

### THE CONQUEST OVER DEATH,

DESCRIBED IN A FUNERAL DISCOURSE IN MEMORY OF THE LADY HARTOPP.

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#### THE INTRODUCTION.

I PERSUADE myself that none of you are unacquainted with that mournful providence that calls me to the service of this day.\* The words which were borrowed from the lips of the dying, I am desired to improve for the instruction and comfort of those that live. They are written in *1 Cor. xv. 26* :—

“THE LAST ENEMY THAT SHALL BE DESTROYED, IS DEATH.”

WHEN a nation hath lain for whole ages under the power of some mighty tyrant, and has suffered perpetual ravages from his hands, what gladness runs through the land, at the sure prediction of his ruin! and how is every inhabitant pleased while he hears of the approaching downfall of his great enemy! “For this is he that has slain my father or my mother, my children, or my dearest relatives, and is still making havoc of the remnant of my friends, while I myself stand in hourly danger.” This pleasure grows up into more perfect joy, when we are assured this is the last tyrant that shall arise, *the last enemy* that shall afflict us; for he shall have no successor, and we shall be for ever free. Such should be the rejoicing of all the saints, when they hear so desirable and divine a promise as the words of my text; *The last enemy that shall be destroyed, is death.*

To improve this glorious proposition, let us consider these four things, with a reflection or two upon each of them :

I. How death appears to be an enemy to the saints.

II. Why it is called the last enemy, or the last that shall be destroyed.

III. How it is to be destroyed, and what are the steps or gradual efforts towards its destruction.

IV. What are the advantages that the saints receive by the destruction of this last enemy.

\* Nov. 9, 1711, the lady Hartopp died, and this discourse was delivered at Stoke Newington, Nov. 25, following.

## SECTION I.—DEATH AN ENEMY EVEN TO GOOD MEN.

THE first enquiry is, how, or in what sense death appears to be an enemy to the saints? That it is in general an enemy to human nature, is sufficiently evident from its first introduction into the world; for it was brought in as an execution of the first threatening given to Adam in paradise, *Gen. ii. 17.* *In the day thou eatest thou shalt die.* It came in as a punishment for sin, and every punishment in some respect opposes our interest and our happiness. When it seized on man at first, and planted the seeds of mortality in his nature, he then began to be deprived of that peace and health, that vigor and immortality which he possessed before his fall, till at last it brought him down to the dust; and ever since, all the sons of Adam have found and felt it an enemy to their natures.

To sinners, indeed, it is an enemy in a more dreadful sense, and its attendants are more terrible a thousand fold. For, besides all the common miseries of the flesh which they sustain, it delivers over their spirits into everlasting misery; it finishes their reprieve and their hope for ever; it plunges them at once into all the terrors of a most awakened conscience, and cuts them off from all the amusements and cares of this life, which laid their guilt and their conscience asleep for a season. Death consigns over a sinner to the chains of the grave, and the chains of hell together, and binds and reserves him a prisoner of despair for the most complete torments of the second death.

But I would confine my discourse here, only to believers, for it is with respect to them this chapter is written. I know death is often called their friend, because it puts an end to their sins and sorrows; but this benefit arises only from the covenant of grace, which sanctifies it to some good purposes to the children of God. It is constrained to become their friend in some instances, contrary to its own nature and its original design: But there is reason enough, if we take a survey of its own nature, and its present appearances, to call it an enemy still, upon these following accounts:

1. Death has generally many terrible attendants and forerunners when it comes; terrible to nature and the flesh of the most exalted Christians.

Here, should I begin to describe the long and dismal train of death, the time would fail me. Shall I mention the sickness and the pain, the sharp anguish of the body, and sometimes the sharper methods of medicine to relieve it, all which prove useless and vain in that day: Shall I recount the tedious and uneasy hours,

the tiresome and sleepless nights, when the patient longs for the slow return of the morning; and still when the light breaks, he finds new uneasiness, and wishes for the shadow and darkness again? Shall I speak of the dulness of the natural spirits, and the clogs that hang heavy upon the soul in those hours; so that the better part of man is bound and oppressed, and shut up, and cannot exert itself agreeable to the character of an intellectual being?

Besides, all the designs of the mind are interrupted and broken in death; all that the saint intended to do for God, is cut off at once, and his holy purposes are precluded, which often adds to the trouble of a dying Christian: *Psalm cxlvi. 4. When man returns to his earth, in that very day his thoughts perish.*

Shall I put you in mind of the sighs and sorrows of dearest friends that stand around the bed all in tears, and all despairing? Shall I speak of the last convulsions of nature, the sharp conflict of the extreme moments, and the struggling and painful efforts of departing life, which none can know fully but those that have felt them, and none of the dead come back to give us an account? Is it possible for us to survey these scenes of misery, and not to believe that the hand of an enemy has been there? The bodies of the saints are the temples of the Holy Ghost, and the members of Christ; *1 Cor. vi. 15, 19.* Death murders these bodies, these members of the Lord, and ruins these temples to the dust, and may well be called their enemy upon this account.

2. Death acts like an enemy, when it makes a separation between the soul and the body. It divides the nature of man in halves, and tears the two constituent parts of it asunder.

Though this becomes an advantage to the soul of the saint through the covenant and appointment of grace, yet to have such an intimate union dissolved between flesh and spirit carries something of terror in it; and there may be an innocent reluctance in the nature of the best Christian against such an enemy as this: therefore St. Paul, in *2 Cor. v. 4,* does not directly desire *to be unclothed*, but rather *to be clothed upon, that mortality might be swallowed up of life;* that is, to be translated at once into an immortal state. The soul and body have been long acquainted with each other, and the soul has performed almost all its operations by the use of the senses and the limbs: It sees by the eye, it hears by the ear, it acts by the hands, and by the tongue it converses. Now to be separated at once from all these, and to be at once conveyed into a new strange world, a strange and unknown state both of being and

action, has something in it so surprising, that it is a little frightful to the nature of man, even when he is sanctified and fitted for heaven.

And as the soul is dismissed by death into a state of separation, so the body, like a fallen tabernacle, is forsaken, lies uninhabited and desolate. Shall I lead your thoughts back to the bed where your dear relatives expired? and give you a sight of the dead, whose beauty is turning apace into corruption, and all the loveliness of countenance fled for ever? The body, that curious engine of divine workmanship, is become a moveless lump: Death sits heavy upon it, and the sprightliness and vigor of life is perished in every feature and in every limb? Shall we go down to the dark chambers of the grave, where each of the dead lie in their cold mansions, in beds of darkness and dust? The shadows of a long evening are stretched over them, the curtains of a deep midnight are drawn around them, the worm lies under them, and the worm covers them.

A saint is no more exempted from all these frightful attendants of death than a sinner is. Those eyes that have been perpetually lifted up to the God of heaven in prayer, lie closed under ground. That tongue that has spoken much for God in the world, lies silent in death. Those hands that have ministered to the necessities of the saints, and those feet that have gone often to the house of God, death has confined them in his chains. Those natural powers that have been active in the service of the gospel, can speak, can move, can act no more. But I need not recite these things to you, the images of them are too fresh and painful, and sit too heavy upon your remembrance.

3. Death is an enemy to the saint, so far as it hinders him from the enjoyment of his perfect heaven, for it keeps one part of him in the grave for many years or ages.

Let us think of the dust of the ancient martyrs, the dust of the apostles, and the holy prophets: Let us look many ages backward to the dust of David, and Abraham, and Noah, to the dust of Adam, the first of men: How long have their souls waited in heaven, as it were in a widowed estate? How long has their flesh been mingled with common earth, and laid confined under the bands of death, useless to all the glorious purposes of their formation and their being? A tedious extent of time! Four or five thousand years, wherein they have done nothing for God in the body, and in the body received nothing from God? For death hinders a believer from some of the business of heaven, and some of the blessedness of it.

1. From some of the business of heaven: It is only the soul that

is then received to glory, and dwells there alone for a season, while death keeps the body prisoner in the grave; it is only the soul that glorifies its Maker in that upper world, the world of spirits, for the flesh lies silent in the dust: *The grave cannot praise thee, death cannot celebrate thee, O Lord; Isaiah xxxviii. 18.* The body is redeemed with the blood of Christ, as well as the soul, but death puts fetters upon it, and forbids it to serve its Redeemer.

2. The believer is restrained also by death from some of the blessedness of heaven; it is only the soul enjoys the delight, and that too only in its abstracted nature, and pure intellectual capacity; it is cut off by death from all that rich variety of pleasure which rises from its communion with so noble a frame as the body of man is. It has no senses to receive the satisfactions that arise from the material part of heaven: It has no eyes to behold the glorified flesh of our Lord Jesus Christ; no ears to hear his voice; no tongue to converse with its Saviour. And though we are sure there is a holy correspondence between Christ Jesus and separate souls, for we are said *to be present with the Lord, when we are absent from the body;* 2 Cor. v. 8. yet this correspondence cannot be so complete and glorious, as it shall be, when with our eyes we shall see God in the form of a man.

3. It is granted, that the separate heaven of souls is abundant pleasure beyond what we can now conceive or express; and our friends, departed in the faith, enjoy the delightful presence of their Lord, and the heavenly converse of their fellow-spirits. That honored and deceased saint, whom we this day mourn, dwells with that Jesus with whom she had long been acquainted; She converses with him in heaven, whom she loved much upon earth: She finds herself safe for ever in his hands, to whose care she committed her immortal concerns; and she rejoices in the sight of him above, with whom she held many hours of sweet correspondence by faith here below. Doubtless also, she holds sweet conversation with the holy souls that went to heaven before her. A soul so greatly desirous of spiritual discourse as she was, so constantly prepared for pious conference and mutual communications of sacred knowledge, must needs enjoy that privilege, and that pleasure, in that upper world, where there is nothing all round her, but what is holy and divine. But it is certain she cannot enjoy that perfection of humble society with Christ in his glorified human nature, nor with fellow-saints, while she is deprived of one part of herself, her body lying silent and moveless in the prison of the grave: and she yet waits for the more complete satisfaction of all her hopes, when death her last enemy shall be destroyed, and her body redeemed

from the dust, together with the bodies of all the saints. This leads me to the next particular :

4. Death is an enemy to believers, because it divides them for a season from the company of their known and valuable friends, and parts the dearest relatives asunder.

Though dying saints be transmitted into better company, even to *the spirits of the just made perfect*, yet it is a mournful thought to be separated so long from those whom they loved with so strong and just an affection. It adds a sharpness even to the last agonies, when we think we must leave parents, children, or friends behind us, whom we love so tenderly ; that we must leave them amidst the sorrows and the temptations, of a vain world and a corrupt age ; that we must leave them struggling with all the difficulties, the hardships, and the dangers that attend a Christian in his travels through this wilderness, and not see their faces again in the flesh, nor converse with them in the manner we were wont to do, till the heavens be no more.

Upon this account also death is a worse enemy to those that survive, for they sustain the biggest loss : It deprives them of their dear and delightful relatives without any recompense, for the world grows so much the more undesirable to a saint by ,the death of every friend. Children are torn away from the embraces of their parents, and the wife is seized from the bosom. This is, at it were, tearing the flesh asunder of those whose hearts are joined ; this gives occasion to bitter sorrows, to long and heavy complaints. How suddenly are we sometimes deprived of *the desires of the eyes*, and the comforts of life, the ornaments and the supports of our earthly state ? And we have lost all their love, and their counsel, and their care ; all their sweet sympathy of joys and sorrows, all their agreeable conversation and heavenly advice. What a tedious way have we to walk through without such a guide or helper ? We have lost the benefit of their watchful eye, their holy jealousy for our souls, their fervent and daily prayers. But there are records in heaven, where all the prayers of the saints are kept ; and God often turns over his register, and, in distant successive years, pours down blessings upon the posterity, and multiplies his graces amongst them, in answer to the requests that were offered up on earth by the saints that are now with God.

5. The last reason I shall mention to prove death an enemy to the saints, is the terror that it fills the mind with long before-hand. There are but few that, in their best estate on earth are got quite above these terrors, and there are none can say, I have been always free from them ; so that in the younger days of their Christianity

at least, all have been afraid of death ; and these fears are enemies to our peace. Some spend *all their lives in this bondage of fear*, and that upon different accounts.

A Christian of weaker faith cries out within himself, “ How shall I pass that awful moment that sets my soul naked before the eyes of a holy God, when I know not whether I am clothed with the righteousness of his Son or no, whether I shall stand the test in that day ? I dread that solemn, that important hour that shall put me into an unchangeable state of miseries that are infinite, or of infinite blessedness. How shall I, that am a sinner, stand before that tribunal and that Judge, in whose sight no mortal can be innocent ? My evidences for heaven are dark and cloudy, that I cannot read them ; they have been often sullied with fresh guilt, and I doubt whether I am new born or no, or reconciled to God. And what if I should be mistaken in this affair of the greatest moment ? The mistake can never be rectified ; therefore I shake at the thoughts of death, that hour of decision ; for my faith is weak.”

Another saint of a strong and lively faith, but of a timorous temper, cries out, “ How shall I bear the agonies and the pangs of death ? I am not afraid to enter into eternity ; the grace of Christ, and his gospel, have given me hope and courage enough to be dead ; but I am still afraid of dying ; it is a hard and painful work, how shall I sustain the sharp conflict ? I shiver at the thoughts of venturing through that cold flood that divides betwixt this wilderness and the promised land.”

Another Christian is too much unacquainted with the world of spirits, with the nature of the separate heaven, with the particular business and blessedness of holy souls departed ; and he is afraid to venture out of this region of flesh and blood, into a vast and unknown world. Though he has good hope through grace, that he shall arrive safe at heaven ; yet the heavenly country is so unknown a land, and the valley of entrance to it so dark, that he fears to pass into it through the shadow of death.

Another is terrified at the thoughts of death, because he knows not how to part with his dear relatives in the flesh, and to leave them exposed to an unkind age and a thousand dangers. “ If I had none to leave behind me, I could die with cheerfulness ; but while I think of such a separation, the thought of death has terror in it.”

Thus upon various accounts a good man may have fearful apprehensions of dying ; and that which carries so much terror about it, may well be called an enemy.

Before we proceed any further, let us make two reflections on the first general head :

I. If death be an enemy to the best of men in so many respects, then we may infer the great evil of sin : For it was sin that brought death into this our world ; *Rom. v. 12.* *By one man sin entered into the world, and death by sin ; and so death passed upon all, for that all have sinned.*

We are too ready to conceive a slight opinion of the evil of sin, because it is so common to the best of men, and so constant an attendant on human nature daily and hourly ; we entertain too gentle and harmless thoughts of it, because its biggest evil is of a spiritual kind, and invisible ; we see not that infinite Majesty which it dishonors, that spotless holiness of God which it offends, the glory and perfection of that law which is broken by it : We can take but short and scanty notices of the injury that it does to God the supreme Spirit, while we are shut up in tabernacles of flesh. But here in these scenes of death, we may survey the sensible and mighty injury that sin has done to the nature of man, and thence infer how offensive it is to God. By our eyes and our ears, we may be terribly convinced, that it is no little evil that could occasion such spreading and durable mischief.

We cannot frame a just notion of what man was in his state of perfect innocence, in his original beauty, and honor, and immortal frame ; and therefore we cannot so well judge of the vastness of the loss which we sustain by sin : but we can see and feel the formidable attendants on death, and learn and believe that it is a root of unknown poisoned bitterness, that has produced such cursed fruit : Especially if we remember that all the sorrows before described, fall upon the saints themselves, even where sin is pardoned, and *death has lost its sting.* But if we descend in contemplation to the endless and unknown misery that waits upon the death of a sinner, and say, all these are the effects of sin ; how inexpressibly dreadful will the cause appear ? The wise man has pronounced them fools, by inspiration, that make a mock at such mischief ; *Prov. xiv. 9.*

II. We may here learn the greatness of the love of Christ, that would venture into the land of death, and conflict with this mighty enemy, and yield to the power of it for a season, for our sakes. *Greater love hath no man than this, that a man lay down his life for his friends ; John xv. 13.* *Hereby perceive we the love of God, because he died for us ; 1 John iii. 16.* *Rom. v. 3.*

Many terrible attendants of death did our Lord meet and struggle with beyond what any of his saints can feel. Death, like a lion,

ran furious upon him, as it does upon a sinner, its proper prey. He met death in its full strength and dominion, for he had all our sins upon him ; and death had its own sharp sting when our Lord entered the combat. There was the wrath of God which was threatened in the broken law to mingle with his pangs and agonies of nature : This made *his soul exceeding sorrowful* ; all his inward powers were amazed, and his heart oppressed with heaviness ; *Mark xiv. 33, 34.* He was almost overwhelmed in the garden, before the thorns or the nails came near him ; and on the cross he complains of the forsakings of God his almighty friend, when death his mighty enemy was just upon him ; and all this, saith he, to every believer, I bore for thy sake : *My love was stronger than death.*

## SECTION II.—DEATH IS THE LAST ENEMY

I PROCEED now to the second general proposed, and that is to enquire, in what sense death is said to be the last enemy, or the last that shall be destroyed : For we may join this word last, either to death, or to destruction ; and in each sense it affords comfort to the saints.

1. It is the last enemy that the saints have to grapple with in this world. The three great adversaries of a Christian are the flesh, the world, and the devil, and they assault him often in this life. Death comes behind, and brings up the rear ; the saint combats with this enemy, and finishes all the war. Every believer has listed himself under the banner of Christ, who is the Captain of his Salvation. When he first gives himself up to the Lord, he renounces every thing that is inconsistent with his faith and hope, he abandons his former slavery, undertakes the spiritual warfare, and enters the field of battle. It is a necessary character of the followers of Christ, that they fight with the flesh, subdue corrupt nature, suppress their irregular appetites, give daily wounds to the body of sin ; *Col. iii. 5. Rom. viii. 13.* They fight against this world ; they refuse to comply with the temptations of it, when it would allure them astray from the path of duty ; they defy its frowns and discouragements, and break through all its oppositions in their way to heaven ; *James iv. 4.* They resist Satan when he tempts them to sin, and vanquish him by *the sword of the Spirit, the sword of God* ; *Eph. iv. 11, 12, 17.* and when he accuses them, and attempts to bring terror into their souls, *they overcome him, and cast him down by the blood of the Lamb* ; *Rev. xii. 10, 11.* They are made conquerors over these adversaries in the strength of Christ. Now

the pangs of death are the last troublers of their peace ; *death is the last enemy* that attacks them, and some have very terrible conflicts with it.

It was in these agonies, in this sharp contention, the words of my text were uttered by that honored saint whose memory will be always precious, and whose loss we this day mourn. This cheerful language of hope, among many other scriptures, broke out from her lips. Thus lively was her faith in a dying hour. Methinks I hear her speaking the words with a firm trust in the promise ; *The last enemy that shall be destroyed is death.* And this encouraged her onward through the few remaining struggles of life and pain. It is as if she had said, “I have given myself up long ago to Christ, I engaged myself young in his service, I have fought with sin, I have learned to subdue flesh and sense, and to live by the faith of the Son of God : I have not courted the flatteries of the world, the vain shows of life ; and I have been enabled to despise the frowns of it, and been kept stedfast in my profession, in the most discouraging and the darkest times. Through the grace of Christ *I have overcome the evil one* ; there remains but one enemy more, whose name is death ; and I trust in the same grace still to obtain complete victory.” Rejoice, ye dear relatives, let all the friends of the deceased rejoice, her name is now written down in heaven amongst the overcomers.

2. Death may be called the last enemy, because it is not utterly destroyed till the resurrection, till Christ hath done all his work upon earth, till he has subdued all his other adversaries, and made use of death as his slave, to destroy many of them. It is in this sense especially that the words of my text are written by St. Paul ; 1 Cor. xv. 24, 25. *Then cometh the end, when he shall have delivered up the kingdom to God, even the Father ; when he shall have put down all rule, and all authority, and all power ; for he must reign till he hath put all enemies under his feet. The last enemy that shall be destroyed, is death.* With regard to each particular Christian, all other enemies are destroyed when he dies, for *whither he goes, they cannot come* ; he puts off the body of flesh and of sin together ; he leaves every corruption behind him, when he ascends to the company of the spirits of the just made perfect. The smiles and the frowns of this vain and vexing world, are too far off to influence the inhabitants of heaven ; and Satan, the tempter and accuser, is for ever forbid entrance at the gates of that holy city. But death holds one part of the saint in his prison, the grave : And though the departed soul has overcome the terrors of this enemy, and triumphs in this expression, *O death, where is thy sting ?* yet

the body is confined as a prisoner under his power: *But the hour is coming, when those that are dead shall hear the voice of the Son of God and live.* All the prisons of the saints shall be broke to pieces, and burnt up, and the keeper destroyed for ever.

Let us make these two reflections on the second general head of this discourse:

I. What abundant encouragement may we derive from hence, to engage us betimes in a war with all the other enemies of our salvation, that having overcome them, we may be assured *death is the last enemy* we shall meet with: And then also we may face death with a braver courage, may conflict with it with better success, may vanquish it by a lively faith, and rejoice in the prospect of its final destruction. The same armor of God, the same divine weapons, and the same almighty assistances by which we have subdued our former adversaries, sin, Satan, and the world, shall be sufficient to gain this conquest too. We cannot begin the holy warfare too soon; none of us are too young to be assaulted by death; but let it come never so early in the morning of our days, it is the last enemy that we can fear, if we are listed in the army of Christ, and have begun the glorious war.

I would address myself to the younger branches of the mourning house, and say, have ye had such a noble example of victory over sin and death in vain? Will ye basely submit to the slavery of the flesh, and yield tamely to the oppositions of this world, which were so bravely resisted by her that is gone before you? Will ye love this world, which is *at enmity with God*, and has ever been at enmity with all the saints? Are ye content to have your names for ever excluded from that honorable list of conquerors, where the names of your ancestors shine before the throne of God, and are recorded with honor in the memory of his churches? Think how dreadful a moment that will be, when you shall look death in the face, if ye have not begun to wage war with sin and Satan before! How dreadful to have many enemies at once assaulting you! the lusts of your own heart, raging desires after the enjoyments of this world, the horrors of conscience, the buffetings of the devil, and the pangs of death. What will ye do in the day of such a visitation? And remember, that though *death be the last enemy* of the saints, it is not thus with sinners; it does but transmit them into the world of damned spirits, where enemies multiply upon them, and grow more outrageous. Besides the bitter anguish of their own conscience, they have the wrath of a God whom they have long provoked, and the malice of evil angels their tormentors, to conflict with to all eternity. *But we hope better things of you,*

*and things that accompany salvation, though we thus speak ; Heb. vi. 9.*

II. What divine comfort is there in my text for aged Christians and dying saints, who have been watchful and vigorous in their war with sin, and gained many victories over this world and Satan, who is called the god of it ! What a delightful view such persons have, when upon the borders of life ! Bear up with divine boldness, ye heirs of glory, for you have but one adversary more to fight with : Let your faith and patience, and holy courage, hold out a little longer, and victory and triumph are yours for ever. There is no enemy lies in ambush behind the tomb ; when you have passed the bars of death, you are out of the reach of all adversaries. Beyond the grave, the coast is all clear for ever : the country flows with rich and untasted pleasures ; every inhabitant is an inward friend ; and peace, and joy, and love smile in every countenance. Will an old saint complain that he finds many infirmities attend his age, that his senses are feeble, that his eyes are dim, that Satan now and then arises from hell, and casts a gloom and darkness around his soul, and buffets him sorely in that darkness ? Will he complain that his natural spirits are heavy, that the world is troublesome to him, and every thing in life painful ? Methinks it is a consolation equal to all these sorrows, that he is just entering into the last field of battle ; the last hour of controversy is begun ; a few strokes more will decide the strife, and make him an eternal conqueror. *Behold, I come quickly, saith our Lord, hold fast that which thou hast gained, that no man take thy crown ; Rev. iii. 11.*

### SECTION III.—THE DESTRUCTION OF DEATH.

THE third thing we are to inquire is, how death is destroyed, and what are the steps, or gradual efforts, towards its destruction.

The person that has this honor put upon him to subdue this universal tyrant is our Lord Jesus Christ ; so the words inform us all round my text. Though his mediation for sinners was sufficient to have prevailed with God to destroy death at once, yet it was agreed upon in the eternal counsels, that for wise ends and purposes it should be done by degrees. His blood was of sufficient value to have procured for his elect a deliverance from every enemy at once, and a translation to heaven as soon as they were born ; but it was wisely concerted betwixt the Father and the Son, that we should pass through temptations, difficulties, and death itself ; that by feeling the sharp assaults of our enemies, we might

be better acquainted with the greatness of our salvation, and pay a larger tribute of thanks and honors to our deliverer.

The steps whereby death is destroyed, are these :

1. It is subdued by the death of Christ ; its sting was then taken away, that is, the guilt of sin ; 1 Cor. xv. 56, 57. *The sting of death is sin, and the strength of sin is the law ; but thanks be to God who giveth us the victory, through our Lord Jesus Christ.* Which verses may thus be explained : Death was the punishment threatened by the law of sin ; but Christ, as our surety, having sustained the execution of that threatening, and answered the law by a satisfaction equal to the offence, death has no more power over him. *God has raised him up, having loosed the pains of death, because it was not possible that he should be holden of it ;* Acts ii. 24. And as Christ by his dying is said to *finish transgression, and make an end of sin*, because he has taken away its power to condemn believers, though he has not yet utterly destroyed its being, so he is said to have *abolished death* ; 2 Tim. i. 10. Because he has so far diminished, and made void its power, that it shall not do any final mischief to the saints. It is like a serpent whose sting is taken away, and whose teeth are broken out ; it may fright us, and do us some injury, but it cannot inflict a venomous or fatal wound. Now the believer, by a lively faith, shares in this victory of Christ over death, and gives thanks to God for it. He knows that though it may hurt his body, and bring it down to the grave for a season, yet it cannot send the soul to destruction, nor confine the body to the dust any longer than Christ shall permit.

2. Death is taken captive and enslaved by Christ at his resurrection and ascension, and made to serve his holy purposes ; *Psalm lxviii. 18. Thou hast ascended on high, thou hast led captivity captive.* This is spoken of our Lord Jesus, who has taken into his own dominion death and the devil, who led the world captive. The enemy is not escaped out of the hands of this conqueror, but is put under his yoke, and constrained into his service. Death, in its first character, was the very threatening and curse of the law of God, and includes in it all misery : but Christ having borne the curse, has redeemed his people from it ; *Gal. iii. 13.* And now he has taken as many as he pleases of the threatenings and terrors of the law into his own new covenant, the covenant of grace ; and has sanctified their nature, and made them blessings to the saints ; he has turned the curse into a blessing ; *Deut. xxviii. 5* ; so that afflictions, and pains, and sorrows, and death itself, are no longer a

curse to them, for they are ordained by the wisdom and grace of Christ to promote their best interest.

Death, in its original design, was the under-servant of God's avenging justice ; it was the jailor to bring the soul out of the body before the divine tribunal, there to receive its condemnation to hell. It was the executioner both to torment and to destroy the flesh, and send the spirit into everlasting misery. But Christ having answered all the demands of this avenging justice, has also purchased the sovereignty over death ; and though sometimes, when it seizes a saint, it may for the present signify his displeasure, as in 1 Cor. xi. 30, yet it always fulfills the designs of his love, and conveys them into his own delightful presence ; therefore, as soon as we are *absent from the body*, we are said to be *present with the Lord* ; 2 Cor. v. 8 ; and when we depart from the flesh, it is *to be with Christ* ; Phil. i. 23. Death was ordained at first to be a slave to Satan, by the righteous appointment of God, both death and the devil are executioners of his wrath ; and Satan is said to have some power over death ; Heb. ii. 14. But Christ, by dying, has subdued Satan, spoiled him of his destroying weapons, has made void his authority, especially with regard to believers ; he has taken death out of his power, and manages it himself ; and thus *he delivers them who through fear of death were held in a long and painful bondage* ; ver. 15.

It is in such views of these that the apostle says to the Corinthian believers, *all things are yours, things present, and things to come*, this world in the joys and sorrows of it, *life and death, all are yours, and ye are Christ's* ; 1 Cor. iii. 22, 23. You have an interest and a share in the possessions and the power of Christ over all things so far as may promote your happiness ; Christ makes *all things*, even death itself, *work together for the good* of his people ; Rom. viii. 28. By death he puts an end to the body of sin, and frees the soul from all those ruffling passions, those inquietudes of the blood, and disorders of nature ; those strong and perverse appetites that cost the Christian so much toil to subdue, and brought him so often under guilt, darkness, and sorrow. By death he delivers the believer from the pains and infirmities of the body, the perpetual languishings of a weakly constitution, and the anguish of acute diseases. He constrains death to give the weary saint release from all the miseries of the present state, and to hide him from the fury of the oppressor. The grave is God's hiding place from the storms and tumults of the world ; *there the weary are at rest, and the wicked cease from troubling* : and instead of consigning us over to the full malice of the devil, death is made a means to con-

vey us away from all his assaults, and translate us into that country, where he has no power to enter. And when the soul is dismissed into the bosom of a reconciled God, by the ministry of death, the body is put to rest in the grave; the grave, which is sanctified into a bed of rest for all the followers of Christ, since the Lord and Master has lain there.

In the gospel of Christ, the name of death is altered into sleep. Christ, who has subdued it, seems to have given it this new name, that it might not have a frightful sound in the ears of his beloved. Though it was sometimes called sleep in the Old Testament, yet that chiefly regarded the silence, and darkness, and inactivity of that state; whereas in the New Testament, and in the xiith of Daniel, it is called sleep, to denote that there is an awaking-time. The ancient Christians, upon this account, called the church-yard, where they buried the dead, *χοιμητήριον*, a sleeping-place. And though the grave may be termed the prison-of death, yet death is not the lord of the prison; he can detain the captives there but during the pleasure of Christ, for he who is *alive for evermore, has the keys of death and hell*, that is, of the separate state; *Rev. i. 18*. Now this is the true reason why Christians have spoken so many kind things of death, which is the king of terrors to a natural man. They call it a release from pain and sin, a messenger of peace, the desired hour, and the happy moment. All this is spoken while they behold it with an eye of faith in the hands of Christ, who has subdued it to himself, and constrained it to serve the designs of his love to them.

3. When it has done all Christ's work, it shall be utterly destroyed. After the resurrection, there shall be no more dying. The saints shall rise immortal, and dwell in heaven for ever, in the complete enjoyment of all that is included in the name of LIFE. As the angel in prophecy lifts up his hand, *and swears by him that lives for ever and ever, that time shall be no longer*; *Rev. x. 6*. So Christ Jesus, the Lord of angels, shall, as it were, pronounce with a sovereign voice, that death shall be no more. He shall send the great archangel with the trumpet of God; it shall sound through the deepest caverns of the grave, and shall summon death from its inmost recesses. The tyrant shall hear and obey, and restore all his captives out of prison; *the dead shall hear the voice of the Son of God, and live*, *John v. 25, 28, 29*. *They that have done good unto the resurrection of life, and they that have done evil unto the resurrection of damnation*. After this our Lord has no employment for death, his slave; the bodies of men shall die no more: There shall be no more any state of separation between the

flesh and spirit; *Rev.* xx. 14. *And death and hell, or Hades, were cast into the lake of fire;* that is, there shall be no more death, no grave, no separate state of souls, all these shall be for ever destroyed.

I. We may infer from this third general head, the great power and glory of our Lord Jesus Christ; we may learn the honor that is due to him from mortals; it is he that hath subdued death, and that by his own dying. A wonderous method of victory! a surprizing conquest! and he lives for ever to destroy it in his appointed time. How great and honorable must he be in the eyes of all mankind, who has vanquished so universal a conqueror? How desirable is his person, and how delightful the sound of his name to every believer! for he suppresses all their enemies and shall destroy them even to the last. How well does he fulfil the great engagement! *Hosea* xiii. 14. *I will ransom them from the power of the grave: I will redeem them from death; O death, I will be thy plagues; O grave, I will be thy destruction; repentance shall be hid from mine eyes.* Let us salute him the Prince of life, *Acts* iii. 15, and adore him under that character. He dispossesses death of all its dominions. He approves himself a complete Saviour of all his saints, and a Redeemer of his captive friends.

II. We may learn also from this head of discourse, the power and excellency of the gospel of Christ, for it discovers to us how this great enemy is vanquished, and when it shall be destroyed; and thus it lays a foundation for courage at death, and gives us assurance of a joyful rising-day. Death being abolished by the mediation of *Christ, immortality and life are brought to light* by his gospel; *2 Tim.* i. 10. That is, there is a brighter discovery of the future state, and of everlasting happiness, than ever before was given to the world.

Here, in the name of Christ, and of his gospel, we may give a challenge to all other religions, and say, which of them has borne up the spirit of man so high above the fears of death as this has done? or has given us so fair, so rational, and so divine an account how death has been overcome by one man, and how by faith in his name we may all be made overcomers? How vain are the trifles with which the heathen priests and their prophets amused the credulous multitude? What silly and insipid fables do they tell us of souls passing over in a ferry-boat to the other world, and describe the fields of pleasure, and the prisons of pain in that country of ghosts and shadows, in so ridiculous a manner, that the wise men of their own nations despised the romance, and few were stupid enough to believe it all. If we consult the religion of their philos-

ophers, they give us but a poor, lame, and miserable account of the state after death. Some of them denied it utterly, and others rave at random in mere conjectures, and float in endless uncertainties. The courage which some of their heroes professed at the point of death, was rather a stubborn indolence, than a rational and well-founded valor; and not many arrived at this hardness of mind, except those that supposed their existence ended with their life, and thought they should be dissolved into their first atoms. Aristotle, one of the greatest men amongst them, tells us that futurity is uncertain, and calls death the most terrible of all terribles.

If we search into the religion of the Jews, which was a scheme of God's own contrivance and revelation to men, we find the affairs of a future world lay much in the dark; their consciences were not so thoroughly purged from the guilt of sin, but that some terrors hung about them, as appears from *Heb. x. 1, 2, 3*, and having so faint and obscure notices of the separate state of souls, and of the resurrection, these were the persons, who in a special manner, *through the fear of death were all their lifetime subject to bondage*; *Heb. ii. 15*. But Christianity lays a fair and rational foundation for our confidence and triumph in the dying hour. It shews how guilt is removed by an all-sufficient sacrifice; and makes it evident that no hell, no vengeance, no shadows of misery await the believer in that invisible world. This makes the Christian venture into it with a certain boldness, and a becoming presence of mind. The doctrine of Christ shews us how the sting of death is taken away, and calls us to fight with a vanquished enemy, a serpent without a sting; it gives us assurance that we shall rise again from the dust with bodies fresher and fairer, glorious in their frame, and their constitution immortal; for death shall be no more. Exalted by so sublime a hope, what is there in death sufficient to depress our spirits, if our faith were but equal to this admirable doctrine? The holy apostles are witnesses, the noble army of martyrs are witnesses, and many a saint in our day is a witness to this truth, and gives honor to this gospel. How many thousands have met death, and all its frightful attendants, with a steady soul, and a serene countenance, and have departed to heaven with songs of praise upon their lips, a smile upon their face, and triumph in their eyes? And this was not owing to any extravagant flights of enthusiasm, nor the fires of an inflamed fancy, but it has been performed often, and may be done daily by the force of a regular faith, on the most solid and reasonable principles, for such are the principles of the gospel of Christ.

SECTION IV.—BLESSINGS GAINED BY THE DESTRUCTION OF  
DEATH.

THE fourth and last general head of discourse, is an inquiry into the advantages which the saints receive by the destruction of this last enemy. This is a large and endless field, for it includes a great part of the happiness of the final heaven. But I shall attempt to mention briefly a few of the benefits that attend my text, and that without a nice distinction of particulars.

When death is destroyed, we shall share in the joy and triumph of Christ for absolute conquest over all his enemies; for there is scarce any glory given to Christ, considered as man, but the saints are said to be humble partners in it, or at least to enjoy the resemblance. Is he appointed the Judge of all? It is promised also to the saints that they shall judge angels, and the twelve tribes of Israel. Do we suffer with him? we shall also reign with him. If we conquer death by faith, we shall rise and triumph. Here we labor and fight with many adversaries, and we think we have routed them, but they rally again, and give us fresh vexation, so that we hardly know how to attempt a song of victory on this side the grave. Besides, death still remains for our trial and conflict; but there we shall rejoice over all our enemies, subdued, destroyed, and abolished for ever.

Then God will be all in all to his saints. This is a consequent which St. Paul mentions in the verses where my text is: God will manage the affairs of his heavenly kingdom in a more immediate way than he has managed his kingdom on earth. Christ having destroyed all the enemies of his church, and presented it safe before the Father, has finished all those divine purposes for which the mediatorial kingdom was entrusted with him; then he shall resign his commission to the Father again; and the ever blessed God shall, in a more immediate and absolute manner, reign over all the creation. He shall more immediately impress devils and damned spirits with a sense of infinite wrath; and with a more immediate sense of his love and eternal favor, shall he for ever bless all the inhabitants of heaven. So much as this seems to be implied in the words of the apostle, 1 Cor. xv. 24, 25, &c. But it is impossible that in this state we should know either the full extent, or the just limitations of that promise, *God shall be all in all*. Our honored and departed friend had these words dwelling upon her heart; these were often in her lips in the days of her faith and hope, and in the hours of her passage through the dark valley: She enjoys part of the pleasure of them in her present

heaven, and with pleasure she expects the more absolute accomplishment, when the resurrection shall complete the blessedness of all the saints.

Another consequent of the destruction of death, is the employment of all the powers of human nature in the service of God, and they shall be neither weak nor weary. For all the inconveniences that attend mortality shall be swallowed up and lost for ever.

Alas, how poor and imperfect is the service which our bodies yield to God in this world ! How heavily do our souls complain of the clog of this flesh, and move onwards heavily in the discharge of duty ! and in the grave the body is quite cut off from all service. But when death shall be dispossessed, when we shall arise from the dust, and put on bodies of glory, then with our whole natures, and with all their powers, we shall do honor to God our Creator, our Redeemer, and our King. The time will come when we *shall hunger no more, neither thirst any more*, and the refreshments of sleep shall be no more necessary to support life. When death shall be destroyed, sleep, the image and picture of death, shall be destroyed too. There shall be nothing that looks like death in all that vital world, that world of immortality. We shall *serve the Lord day and night in his temple*; that is continually, for there shall be *no night there*; Rev. vii. 15, 16. and xxii. 25. Then we shall taste all the true blessedness that human nature is capable of, and that without danger of excess or sin. When God first united these two pieces of his workmanship, the soul and body, and composed a man, he designed him the subject of various pleasures, wherein each part should have been subservient to the other, to render the felicity of the creature perfect. It is sin and death that have entered into our natures, and prevented this noble design in our present state ; but the counsel of the Lord shall stand. And when he raises up the body from the grave, it shall leave all the seeds of death behind it. The faculties and the senses shall awake in all their original sprightliness and vigor, and our future heaven shall be furnished with objects suited to entertain those powers, and to convey intense pleasure to glorified minds without danger of satiety or weariness. When the time comes that *there shall be no more death, God shall wipe away all tears from our eyes*; there shall be no sorrow nor crying, *nor any more pain*; for the former things are passed away, and he that sits upon the throne shall say, *behold I make all things new*; Rev. xxi. 4, 5.

Then shall we enjoy the constant society of our best friends and dearest acquaintance; those that have arrived at the New Jerusa-

lem themselves, and have assisted us in our travels thither. And we shall delightfully entertain and be entertained with the mutual narratives of divine grace, and the wise and holy methods of providence, whereby we have been conducted safe through all the fatigues and dangers of the wilderness to that heavenly country. And that which shall add an unknown relish to all the former blessings, is the full assurance that we shall possess them for ever ; for every one of our enemies are then destroyed, and the last of them is death. Here on earth it is a perpetual pain to the mind to think that those whom we love are mortal ; the next moment may divide them from us far as the distance of two worlds. They are seized on a sudden from our eyes, and from our embraces ; and this thought allays the delight that we take in their company, and diminishes the joy ; but in that world all our friends are immortal ; *we shall ever be with the Lord*, and ever with one another too ; 1 *Thess.* iv. 17.

May I be permitted here to make a short reflection on that mournful providence that has joined two lovely relatives in death,\* and given occasion for the sad solemnities of this day ? The pious mother led the way to heaven but a few days before the pious daughter followed, each of them the parent of a reputable family, and the descendants from a progenitor,† whose name is in honor among the churches. As mutual affection joined their habitations in life, so the care of surviving friends has laid them to rest in their beds of earth together. We trust they are also joined in the world of blessed spirits on high, and they shall be joined again in the world of glorified saints in the morning of the resurrection. Death, their common enemy, has taken them both captives together ; has bound in his chains the mother and the daughter ; but they are prisoners of hope, and together they shall obtain a glorious release.

I would copy a line from that most beautiful elegy of David, and apply it here with more justice than the Psalmist could to Saul and Jonathan, 2 Sam. i. 23. *Lovely and pleasant were they in their lives, and in death they were not divided.* Silent were they, and retired from the world, and unknown except to their intimate friends ; but God was a witness of their hours of divine retirement.

\* The Lady Hartopp, daughter of Charles Fleetwood, Esq., and wife to Sir John Hartopp, of Newington, Baronet, died November 9, 1711. Mrs. Gould, their daughter, and wife to Mr. Gould, now Sir Nathaniel Gould, of Newington, died six days after, viz. November 15, and left their households behind them oppressed with double sorrows.

† Charles Fleetwood, Esq., of Norfolk.

The graces of Christianity, and the virtues of domestic life, which are the proper ornaments of the sex, were the marks of their utmost aim and ambition ; nor did they seek the flatteries of the court or the city, nor affect the gaieties of a degenerate age. Humble they were, and averse from public show and noise ; nor will I disturb their graves by making them the subject of public praise. In the hearts of their families, their memory, their image, and their example will live. Oh may the brightest and best parts of their image and example live in the character and practice of all that are left behind !

What a dreadful and overwhelming thought is it to suppose, that any of that honored and numerous household should be divided asunder at the last day ! Give all diligence then, my worthy friends, to *make your calling and your election sure* ; devote yourselves to the God of your predecessors ; trust in the same Saviour ; tread in the same paths of holiness ; and pursue the same glory. What a joy will it be to that pious lady that is gone before, to find, that those that were dear to her as her own soul have overcome sin and death, and in a blessed succession arrive at the same heaven ! Let me entreat you to give her this satisfaction, and not disappoint her prayers and her hopes. Let your venerable surviving parent, who is now confined at home under sorrows and sharp pains, obtain this pleasure. Let that dear partner of her joys and cares behold the power of religion appearing and reigning in all your hearts before his eyes are closed in death. Give both of them this consolation at the appearance of Christ, that they may say. “*Lord, here we are, and the children that thou hast given us.* Here we are with our ancestors, and our offspring, and our kindred around us, adoring thy rich grace together, and entering together into the state of perfect glory which thou hast prepared.”

It remains only that I should propose some reflections on the last head of discourse for the meditation of this whole assembly, and especially for those that are engaged in the spiritual warfare, and proceed to daily conquests.

Shall death, with all its attendants, be destroyed for ever ? And are these the blessings that shall succeed ? Then enter into this joy beforehand by a lively faith, and begin the song of triumph—*O death, where is thy sting, O grave, where is thy victory ?* 1 Cor. xv. 55. *Rejoice not over me, O mine enemy, when I shall fall I shall arise ;* Mic. vii. 8.

After you have fought many battles with Satan, subdued many sins, and encountered a thousand temptations with success, perhaps you find new adversaries still arising ; look forward then to this

joyful hour, and say, "But I shall one day be for ever free from all these toils and labors of war, for all my enemies shall be overcome, since death, the last of them, shall be subdued." When you feel the infirmities of this mortal body hang heavy upon your spirits, and damp your devotion, read the words of this promise, and rejoice, "These pains and these languors of nature shall one day vanish and be no more; for death, with all its train, must be destroyed."

When some of your dearest friends are seized by this tyrant, and led away to the grave in his chains, while you are wounded to the very soul, remember that Christ, your Captain and your Saviour, shall revenge this quarrel upon your last enemy; for he has appointed the hour for his destruction. Mourn not, therefore, for the dead, as *those that sorrow without hope, for those that sleep in Jesus, the Lord shall bring with him* when he comes; 1 *Thess.* iv. 13. And he shall join you together in a blessed and durable friendship, where it shall be eternally impossible for enemies to break in upon your peace; for death, the last of them, shall be then destroyed. And the Lord has left us this comfort in the end of his sacred writings, *Surely I come quickly.* Let each of us with a cheerful heart reply, *even so, come, Lord Jesus.* Amen.

## DISCOURSE II.

### THE HAPPINESS OF SEPARATE SPIRITS, &c.

ATTEMPTED IN A FUNERAL DISCOURSE IN MEMORY OF SIR JOHN HARTOPP.

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#### THE INTRODUCTION.

It is a solemn and mournful occasion that has brought me to this place this day.\* Divine Providence, and the will of surviving relatives, call me to pay the last sacred and pious respect to the memory of the deceased, a worthy gentleman, and an excellent Christian, who has lately left our world in a good old age.

It is something more than ten years since I was engaged in the same service to the memory of his honored and pious lady, when, by a double and painful stroke, the mother and the daughter were joined in death; when the two kindred families were smitten in the tenderest part, and each of them sustained a loss that could never be repaired.<sup>†</sup>

This town was the place which they all had honored with their habitation, and spent the largest part of their lives amongst you; but they are now become inhabitants of the heavenly city, they dwell in the world of blessed spirits, and I would lead your devoutest thoughts to follow them thither. Come then, let our meditations take their rise from the words of the great apostle, in *Heb. xii. 23.*

“THE SPIRIT OF JUST MEN MADE PERFECT.”

It is a much sweeter employment to trace the souls of our departed friends into those upper and brighter regions, than to be ever dwelling upon the dark prospect, and fixing our eyes upon death, and dust, and the grave; and that not only because it gives us a comfortable view of the persons whom we mourn, and thus it relieves our most weighty and smarting sorrows, but because it leads us to consider our own best interest, and our highest hopes,

\* Sir John Hartopp died April 1, 1722, in the 85th year of his age; and the substance of this discourse was delivered briefly at Stoke Newington, April 15, following.

† See a particular account of the foregoing discourse in the margin. p. 72.

and puts us in mind of the communion that we have with those blessed spirits in heaven, while we belong to the church on earth. *We are come*, says the apostle, verse 22. We, in the gospel state, are come *to mount Zion, to the heavenly Jerusalem, to the innumerable company of angels, and to the spirits of just men made perfect.* What sort of communion it is that good men here below maintain with those exalted spirits, is not my present business to describe; therefore I apply myself immediately to the words of my text, and confine myself to them only.

And here I shall consider these four things:

I. Who are particularly designed by *the spirits of the just*; and here I shall make it evident the apostle intends not merely the spirits of good men, but such good spirits as are dismissed from their mortal bodies.

II. We shall inquire wherein consists the perfection to which they have arrived, and what are the excellencies in which they are made perfect.

III. What sort of perfection it is they enjoy, and what are the peculiar characters of it.

IV. How they arrive at this perfect state, and what influence the dismission from their bodies has towards their attainment of it.

And then conclude with a few remarks for our instruction and practice, suitable to the present providence.

#### SECTION I.—OF THE SPIRITS OF THE JUST.

OUR first inquiry is, whom are we to understand by the spirits of the just here spoken of?

The name of just or righteous men, taken in a large and general sense, as it is often used in Scripture, signifies all those who fear and love God, and are accepted of him. In the New Testament they are frequently called saints, believers, or children of God: but in both parts of the Bible they are often described by the name of just or righteous, and they are properly called so upon these three accounts:

I. Their persons are made righteous in the sight of God, having their sins forgiven, and their souls justified through the death and righteousness of Jesus Christ. So the word is used, Rom. v. 19. *By the obedience of one shall many be made righteous.* They have seen themselves all guilty and exposed to the wrath of God, *they have fled to lay hold on the hope set before them*, they have mourned before God, and been weary of sin, they have received the great atonement, they have committed their ease by a living faith to Jesus the righteous, the surety and the Saviour of perishing sinners; and

that God hath received them into his favor, and has imputed righteousness to them, even that God who is *just, and the justifier of them that believe in Jesus*. Now this sense cannot reasonably be excluded from the character of a saint, though the word righteous is more frequently taken in the following senses.

II. Their natures are made righteous, and sanctified by the Spirit of grace. They have a principle of grace and holiness wrought in them; so the world signifies, Eph. iv. 24. *The new man, which is created after the image of God, in righteousness and true holiness.* They were once sinners, disobedient and unholy, as they were born into this world; but they are born again, and made new creatures by the grace of the Holy Spirit. Their understandings are enlightened to see the dreadful evil of sin, and a divine beauty of holiness. Their wills are turned from folly and vanity, from the love of earth, and sense, and sin, to a holy contempt of the world, and a hatred of all that is sinful; from a neglect of religion to desires after God, and a delight in him; from a mere formal profession of the gospel, to the faith and love of Christ, and a zealous pursuit of holiness; and they place their highest hopes and their joys in things divine, spiritual, and eternal.

III. Their lives are righteous, and conformable to the will of God revealed in his word. So the term righteous signifies, 1 John iii. 7. *He that doeth righteousness is righteous.* The just man makes it the business of his life to do works of righteousness, taken in the largest sense; to worship God, to seek his glory, to obey his will, which is the rule of righteousness; to do him all the service on earth that his station and circumstances admit of, and to deal faithfully and justly among men, and to do them all the good that lies in his power.

These are the just men whose spirits are spoken of in my text.

Now it is evident the apostle here means their spirits which are in heaven, and departed from these mortal bodies, because the train of blessed companions, which he describes just before, leads our thoughts to the invisible world.

If we can suppose any part of these two verses to refer to earth and our present state, it must be when he says, *ye are come to Mount Zion, to the city of the living God*, that is, to the visible church of Christ under the gospel dispensation. But then he adds, you are come also to the *heavenly Jerusalem*, which may probably include all the inhabitants of heaven in general; and, descending to particulars, he adds, *to an innumerable company of angels, and to the general assembly and church of the first-born, who are written in heaven*: whereby we must understand the whole invisible

church of God among men, if we do not confine it to those who are already of the church triumphant. And next he leads us to *God, the Judge of all*, and to *spirits of just men made perfect*; that is, spirits released from flesh and blood, who have stood before God their Judge, and are determined to a state of perfection in heaven.

Besides, when St. Paul speaks of fellow-Christians here on earth, it is not his manner to call them spirits, but men, or brethren, or saints, &c.; therefore, by the naked and single term spirits, he distinguishes these persons from those who dwell in mortal bodies, and raises our thoughts to the world of blessed souls, released from the wretched ties and bondage of flesh and blood, the spirits of good men departed from this earth, and dwelling in the better regions of heaven.

I would here take notice also, that the apostle perhaps in this place chooses rather to call them just or righteous men, which is a term used frequently both in the Old and New Testament, that he might include the patriarchs and the Jewish saints as well as the souls of departed Christians. Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, Noah, Daniel, and David, Job, Moses, and Elijah, dwell in that happy world, with a thousand other spirits of renown in the ancient church, as well as the spirits of those that have seen the Messiah, and believed in Jesus of Nazareth. What a noble and wonderous assembly! What an amazing and blissful society of human souls, gathered from various nations, and from all ages, and joined together in the heavenly Jerusalem, the family of God above!

I shall proceed now to the *second* thing I proposed.

## SECTION II.—OF THEIR PERFECTION IN KNOWLEDGE, HOLINESS, AND JOY.

THE second enquiry is this, wherein consists the perfection at which these spirits are arrived?

The word perfect cannot be taken here in its most extensive, absolute, and sublime sense, for in that sense it can belong only to God; he is and must be the sum and centre of all perfection for ever: All excellency and all blessedness in a supreme degree meet in him; none besides him can pretend to absolute perfection. Nor is the word used here in its most sublime sense, in which it may be applied to a creature; for when the spirits of just men are made never so perfect, the blessed soul of our Lord Jesus Christ will be

more perfect than they ; for *in all thinge he must have the pre-eminence* ; Col. i. 18.

Perfection, therefore, is taken in a comparative sense here, as in many other places of Scripture. So St. Paul calls those Christians on earth perfect, who are advanced in knowledge and Christianity far above their fellows ; as in 1 Cor. ii. 6. *I speak wisdom among them that are perfect.* Phil. iii. 15. *Let as many as are perfect be thus minded.* So that blessed souls above are only perfect in a comparative sense. They are advanced in every excellency of nature, and every divine privilege, far above all their fellow-saints here on earth.

I desire it also to be observed here, that the word perfection doth not generally imply another sort of character than what a man possessed before, but a far more exalted degree of the same character which he was before possessed of. The perfection, then, of the spirits of the just in heaven, is a glorious and transcendent degree of those spiritual and heavenly qualifications and blessings which they enjoyed here on earth in a lower measure ; implying also a freedom from all the defects and disorders to which they were here exposed, and which are inconsistent with their present felicity.

If I were to branch it into particulars, I would name but these three, *viz.* 1. A great increase of knowledge, without the mixture of error. 2. A glorious degree of holiness, without the mixture of the least sin. 3. Constant peace and joy, without the mixture of any sorrow or uneasiness.

Let us consider them distinctly.

1. A great increase of knowledge, without the mixture of error ; and in this sense it is perfect knowledge.

Part of the happiness of spirits consists in contemplation ; and the more excellent the object is which we contemplate, and the more perfect our acquaintance with it, the greater is our happiness. Therefore the knowledge of God, the infinite and eternal Spirit, is the true felicity of all the ranks of created spirits in the upper and lower worlds. What unknown and unrivalled beauties are contained in the attributes of his nature ! What a heavenly pleasure is it to lose ourselves amongst the boundless perfections of his self-sufficiency and eternal existence, his wisdom, his power, his justice, his holiness, his goodness, and his truth ! And what a divine harmony amongst them all !

How does the philosopher entertain and feast himself with daily discoveries of new wonders amongst the works of God, and beholds the print of the hands of his Creator on them all ! What superior

glories are seen by the inquiring Christian amongst the greater wonders of his grace ! and he receives the discovery of them with superior delight, for his eternal life is in them. *John xvii. 3. This is life eternal, that they might know thee, the only true God, and Jesus Christ whom thou hast sent.* To know the Father and the Son, according to the revelation which they have given of themselves in the gospel, is not only the way to obtain life eternal, and consequently the business of the saints below, but the knowledge of this Son and this Father in their natural glories, in their personal characters, in their sublime and mysterious relations to each other, and in their most amazing contrivances and transactions for the recovery of lost sinners, may be matter of the most pleasing enquiry and delicious contemplation to the angels themselves, *1 Pet. i. 12.* These are the *things which the angels desire to look into.* And the *spirits of the just made perfect* are employed in the same delightful work, for which they have much more concern, and a dearer interest in it. We know something of God by the light of nature. The reason that is within each of us shines like a slender candle in a private room, and gives us some twinkling and uncertain notions of our Creator. The notices that we obtain by the light of grace, or the gospel here on earth, are far brighter and surer, like the moon at midnight shining upon a dark world, or like the rise of the morning star, and the dawning of the day. But the knowledge which departed spirits obtain of their Creator and their Redeemer in the light of glory, is as far superior to that of nature and grace, as the lustre of the meridian sun exceeds the pale moon-beams, or the glimmering twilight of the morning.

This is what the apostle describes, *1 Cor. xiii. 9, 10, 11, 12. For we know but in part, and we prophesy in part. But when that which is perfect is come, then that which is in part shall be done away.* When I was a child, I spake as a child, I understood as a child, I thought as a child ; but when I became a man, I put away childish things. For now we see through a glass darkly, but then face to face : Now I know in part, but then shall I know even as also I am known. The imperfection of our knowledge in this world consists much in this, that we are liable to perpetual mistakes. A thousand errors stand thick around us in our enquiries after truth, and we stumble upon error often in our wisest pursuits of knowledge ; for we see but through a glass darkly, but then we shall know even as we are known, and see face to face ; that is, we shall have a more immediate and intuitive view of God and Christ, and of the Holy Spirit, without such mediums as are now necessary for our instruction. We shall know them in a manner something

akin to the way whereby God knows us, though not in the same degree of perfection, for that is impossible. Yet in these respects our knowledge shall bear some resemblance to the knowledge of God himself, *viz.* that it shall be not merely a rational knowledge, by inferences drawn from his works, nor merely a knowledge by narration, or report and testimony, such as we now enjoy by his word, but it shall be such a sort of knowledge as we have of a man when we see his face, and it shall also be a certain and unwavering knowledge, without remaining doubts, without error or mistake. O happy spirits, that are thus divinely employed, and are entertaining themselves and their fellow-spirits with those noble truths and transporting wonders of nature and grace of God and Christ, and things heavenly, which are all mystery, entanglement, and confusion to our thoughts in the present state!

II. This perfection consists in a glorious degree of holiness, without the mixture of the least sin; and in this sense it is perfect holiness.

All holiness is contained and summed up in the love and delightful service of God and our fellow-creatures.

When we attempt to love God here on earth, and by the alluring discoveries of grace try to raise our affections to things of heaven, what sinful damps and coldness hang heavy upon us? What counter-allurements do we find towards sin and the creature, by the mischievous influences of the flesh and this world? What an estrangedness from God do the best of Christians complain of? And when they get nearest to their Saviour in the exercises of holy love, they find perpetual reason to mourn over their distance, and they cry out often with pain at their hearts, "What a cursed enemy abides still in me, and divides me from the dearest object of my desire and joy!" But *the spirits of the just made perfect* have the nearest views of God their Father and their Saviour; and as they see them face to face, so, may I venture to express it, they love them with a union of heart to heart; for *he that is joined to the Lord* in the nearest union in heaven, may well be called *one spirit with him*, since the apostle says the same thing of the saints on earth, *1 Cor. vi. 17.*

As our love of God is imperfect here, so is all our devotion and worship.

While we are in this world, sin mingles with all our religious duties: We come before God with our prayers and our songs, but our thoughts wander from him in the midst of worship, and we are gone on a sudden to the ends of the earth. We go up to his temple, and we try to serve him there an hour or two; then we return

to the world, and we almost forget the delights of the sanctuary, and the God we have seen there. But *the spirits of the just made perfect are before the throne of God, and serve him day and night in his temple*; Rev. vii. 15. And though they may not be literally engaged in one everlasting act of worship, yet they are ever busy in some glorious services for him. If they should be sent on any message to other worlds, yet they never wander from the sight of their God: For if the guardian angels of children *always behold the face of our heavenly Father*, Matt. xviii. 10, even when they are employed in their divine errands to our world, much more may we suppose the spirits of just men made perfect never lose the blissful vision, whatsoever their employments shall or can be.

And as our acts of worship on earth and converse with God are very imperfect, so is our zeal and activity for God extremely defective; but it shall be ever bright and burning in the upper world.

When we would exert our zeal for God on earth, how many corrupt affections mix with that zeal and spoil it! *Dead flies, that cause that noble ointment to send forth a stinking savor!* How much of self, and pride, and vain ambition too often mingle with our desires to serve Christ and his gospel! Some have preached Christ out of *vain glory*, or envy; and a mixture of those vices may taint our pious ministrations. When we seem to *drive furiously*, like Jehu to the destruction of the priests and the worship of Baal, too often the wildfire of our lusts and passions, our envy and wrath, and secret revenge join together to animate our chariot-wheels. When we are ready to say with him, *come, and see my zeal for the Lord*, perhaps God espies in our hearts too much of the same carnal mixture; for Jehu exalted the true God, that he might establish himself a king; 2 Kings x. 16. But the spirits of the just are perfect in zeal, and pure from all mixtures. Their very natures are like the angels; they are so many flames of sacred and unpolluted fire, *the ministers of God that do his pleasure*, and then hide their faces behind their wings; when they have done all for God, they fall down and confess they are nothing.

Temptation and sin have no place in those happy regions. These are the evils that belong to earth and hell; but within the gates of heaven nothing must enter that tempteth, *nothing that defileth*; Rev. xxi. 27. It is the mixture of sinful thoughts and idle words, sinful actions and irregular affections, that makes our state of holiness so imperfect here below. *We groan within ourselves, being burdened*; we would be rid of these criminal weaknesses, these guilty attendants of our lives: But the spirits above are under a sweet necessity of being for ever holy; their natures have put on

perfection ; the image of God is so far completed in them, that nothing contrary to the divine nature remains in all their frame, for they see God in all the fairest beauties of his holiness, and they adore and love. They behold him without a veil, and are *changed into the same image, from glory to glory* ; 2 Cor. iii. 10. If these words are applicable to the state of grace, much more to that of glory. They see Christ as he is, and they are made completely like him, 1 John iii. 2, which is true concerning the state of separate spirits, as well as the hour of resurrection.

As their love to God is perfect, so is their love to all their fellow-saints.

We try to love our fellow-creatures and fellow-Christians here on earth ; but we have so many corrupt passions of our own, and so many infirmities and imperfections belong to our neighbors also, that mutual love is very imperfect. *Love is the fulfilling of the law* ; Rom. xiii. 10. But we shall never fulfil that law perfectly till we are joined to the spirits of the just in glory, where there is no inhabitant without the flame of sacred love, no single spirit unlovely or unbeloved.

In those happy mansions there is no envy raised by the perfections or the honors of our neighbor spirits ; no detracting thought is known there, no reproachful word is heard in that country ; and perhaps no woid of reproach is to be found in the whole heavenly language. Malice and slander, and the very names of infamy, are unknown in those regions ; and wrath and strife are eternal strangers. No divided opinions, no party quarrels, no seeds of discord are sown in heaven. Our little angry jars and contentions have no place there, and the noise of war and controversy ceases for ever. There are no offences given, and none are taken in that world of love. Neither injury nor resentment is ever known or practised there, those bitter and fatal springs of revenge and blood. Universal benevolence runs through the whole kingdom ; each spirit wishes well to his neighbor as to himself ; and till we arrive there, we shall never be made perfect in love, nor shall we see the blessed characters of it described in the Scriptures fully copied out in living examples.

In that holy world dwells God himself, who is original love ; there resides our Lord Jesus Christ, who is love incarnate ; and from that sacred head flows an eternal stream of love through every member, and blesseth all the inhabitants of that land with its divine refreshments. Holiness is perfect among the spirits of the just, because love is perfect there.

Objection. But are there not several graces and virtues that be-

long to the saints on earth that are finished at death, and can have no room in heaven? How then can perfection of holiness in heaven consist in an increase of the same graces we practised on earth?

*Answer.* Yes; there are several such virtues and such graces as faith and repentance, and godly sorrow, patience, and forbearance, love to enemies, and forgiveness of injuries, &c. But all these arise from the very imperfection of our present state, from the sins and follies of ourselves or our fellow-creatures. Faith arises from the want of sight; repentance from the returns of guilt; godly sorrow from the workings of sin in us. Patience owes its very nature and exercise to the afflictions we sustain from the hand of God; and forbearance and forgiveness respects the injuries that we receive from our fellow-creatures. But in heaven faith, so far as it regards the absence of God and Christ, is lost in sight and enjoyment, as the light of a glimmering taper is lost in the blaze of sunbeams. Repentance of old sins, so far as it is attended with any painful or shameful passions, ceases for ever in heaven, and there is no new guilt for us to repent of; there shall be no evil working in us to give pain to the spirit; no affliction from God to demand a patient submission; no injuries from men to be borne or forgiven.

But there is the same pious temper still continues in the spirits of the just made perfect, which was the spring of those graces on earth; and could the objects or occasions of them return, every spirit there would exercise the same grace, and that in a more glorious and perfect manner, for their very natures are all over holy.

III. The last thing I shall mention, wherein the perfection of the saints above consists, is, their constant peace and exalted joy, without any mixture of sorrow or uneasiness; and this is joy and peace in perfection.

If our knowledge, our love, and our holiness are imperfect on earth, our joys must be so. The mistakes and the follies to which we are liable here below, the guilt that pains the conscience, and the sin that is restless and ever working within us, will *bring forth fruits of present sorrow*, where they do not produce the fruit of eternal death. A saint in this world will groan under these burdens; and it is divinely natural for him to cry out, *O wretched man! who shall deliver me from the body of this death?* Rom. vii. 24.

Thus there are many things that are within us, and that belong to us in this world, that forbid the perfection of our joys. And besides all these, we are attached and tied down to many other uneasinesses while we dwell on earth,

This world is a fair theatre of the wisdom and power of God, but it is hung round and replenished with temptations to fallen man, proper for a state of trial; soft and flattering temptations, that by the senses are ever drawing away the soul from God and heaven, and breaking in upon its divine repose and joy ; and while we are surrounded with a thousand dangers, we can not be said to dwell in *perfect peace*. The follies and the crimes of others afflict the soul of a good man, and put him to pain, *as the righteous soul of Lot was vexed in Sodom from day to day with their unlawful deeds* ; 2 Pet. ii. 8. The greater vexations, and the little teasing accidents of life that attend us, disturb the sacred rest of the saint, and ruffle or wound his spirit. And the best of men on this account are sometimes ready to cry out with David, *Psalm cxx. 5. 6. Wo is me that I sojourn in Meshech, and dwell in the tents of Kedar : My soul hath long dwelt with them that hate peace. O that I had wings like a dove, for then would I fly away, and be at rest* ; Psalm lv. 6.

And sometimes God himself is absent from the soul that longs after him ; *he hides his face, and then who can behold it ?* We are smitten with a sense of sin, and the conscience is restless. We wander from thing to thing in much confusion of spirit ; we go from providences to ordinances, from one word in the Bible to another, from self-examination and inward guilt to the blood of Christ, and the mercy of the Father ; and it may be outward sorrows fall on us at the same time, guilt and judgment attend us at once : The deep of affliction calls to the deep of sin at the noise of the floods of divine anger, *Psalm xlvi. 7.* We are kept in the dark for a season, and we see not the light of his countenance, nor know our own interest in his love. *We go forward, as Job did, but he is not there ; and backward, but we cannot perceive him, &c.* All the comfort that a good man hath at such a season is to appeal to God that *he knoweth the way that I take ; when he hath tried me, I humbly hope I shall come forth as gold* ; Job. xxiii. 8, 9, 10.

But *the spirits of the just made perfect* are in peaceful and joyous circumstances. They know God, for they see his face ; they know that they love him, for they feel and enjoy it as the warmest and sweetest affection of their hearts ; and they are sure God loves them too, for every moment they taste his love, and live upon it in all the rich varieties of its manifestation.

Oh ! what unknown and endless satisfactions of mind arise from the full assurance of the love of God ! What tongue can express, or what heart can conceive the sacred pleasure that fills every soul in heaven under the immediate impressions of divine love ! When

the poor, trembling, doubting believer, that knew himself to be infinitely unworthy of the favor of God, or of the meanest place in his house, shall be acknowledged as a son in the midst of his Father's court on high, and amongst millions of congratulating angels.

No cloud shall ever interpose, no melancholy gloom, no shadow of darkness shall ever arise in these regions; for the countenance of God, like the sun in its highest strength, shall shine and smile upon them for ever. And through the length of all their immortality, there shall not be the least interruption of the sweet intercourse of love on God's side or on theirs.

In that world there is no sorrow, for there is no sin; *the inhabitants of that city, of the heavenly Jerusalem, shall never say I am sick; for the people that dwell therein shall be forgiven their iniquity;* Isaiah xxxiii. 24. When the righteous are dismissed from this flesh *they enter into peace,* their bodies *rest in their beds of earth,* and their spirits *walk in heaven, each one in his own uprightness;* Isaiah lvii. 2. And as there is no sin within them to render them uneasy, so there is no troublesome guest, no evil attendant without them, that can give them fear or pain; no sinners to vex them, no tempter to deceive them, no spirit of hell to devour or destroy; *Isaiah xxxv. 9, 10. No lion shall be there, nor any ravenous beast shall go up thereon, it shall not be found there; but the redeemed shall walk there. And the ransomed of the Lord shall return and come to Zion with songs, and everlasting joy upon their heads; they shall obtain joy and gladness, and sorrow and sighing shall flee away.*

God himself shall never be absent, and then they cannot be unhappy. They *behold his face in righteousness,* and they are *satisfied when they awake with his likeness;* Psalm xvii. 15. When they leave this world of dreams and shadows, and awake into that bright world of spirits, they behold the face of God, and are made like him, as well as when their bodies shall awake out of the dust of death in the morning of the resurrection, formed in the image of the blessed Jesus. That glorious scripture, in *Rev. xxi. 3, 4*, be the sense of it what it will, can never be fulfilled in more glory on earth than belongs to the state of heaven. *The tabernacle of God is with men, and he will dwell with them, and they shall be his people, and God himself shall be with them, and be their God. And God shall wipe away all tears from their eyes; and there shall be no more death, neither sorrow, nor crying, neither shall there be any more pain; for the former things are passed away.*

The saints above see their blessed Lord and Saviour in all his

exalted glories, and they are with him where he is, according to his own prayer, and his own promise, *John xvii. 24.* and *xiv. 3.* *They are absent from the body, and present with the Lord.* They have esteemed him on earth above all things, and longed after the sight of his face, *whom having not seen they loved;* *1 Pet. i. 8.* but now they behold him, the dear Redeemer that gave his life and blood for them, they *rejoice with joy much more unspeakable and full of superior glory.*

Thus I have shewn wherein this perfection of spirits in heaven consists. It is a high and glorious degree of all those excellencies and privileges they were blessed with on earth, without any mixture of the contrary evil. It is a perfection of knowledge, holiness, and joy.

And canst thou hear of all this glory, O my soul, and meditate of all this joy, and yet cleave to earth and the dust still? Hast thou not often mourned over thy ignorance, and felt a sensible pain in the narrowness, the darkness, and the confusion of thy ideas, after the utmost stretch and labor of thought? How little dost thou know of the essence of God, even thy God, and how little of the two united natures of Jesus, thy beloved Saviour? How small and scanty is thy knowledge of thyself, and of all thy fellow-spirits, while thou art here imprisoned in a cottage of clay? And art thou willing to abide in this dark prison still, with all thy follies and mistakes about thee? Does not the land of light above invite thy longing, and awaken thy desires; those bright regions where knowledge is made perfect, and where thy God and thy Redeemer are seen without a veil. And is not the perfect holiness of heaven another allurement to thee, O my soul? Dost thou not stretch thy wings for flight at the very mention of a world without temptation and without sin? How often hast thou groaned here under the burden of thy guilt, and the body of death? How hard hast thou wrestled with thy inbred iniquities? An hourly war, and a long, toilsome conflict! How hast thou mourned in secret, and complained to thy God of these restless inward enemies of thy peace? And art thou so backward still to enter into those peaceful regions, where these enemies can never come, and where battle and war are known no more, but perfect and everlasting holiness adorns the inhabitants, and crowns of victory and triumph.

Oh the shattered and imperfect devotion of the best saints on earth! Oh the feeble fluttering efforts of praise! What poor hallelujahs we send up to heaven on notes of discord, and, as it were, on broken strings? Art thou not willing, O my soul, to honor thy God and thy Saviour with sweeter harmony? And yet

what a reluctance dost thou shew to enter into that world of joy and praise, because the dark shadow of death hangs over the passage? Come, awake, arise, shake off thy fears; and let the sense and notice of what the spirits of the just above enjoy, raise thy courage, and excite thee to meet the first summons with sacred delight and rapture.

But I fear I have dwelt too long upon these three last particulars, because they are matters of more obvious notice, and more frequent discourse; yet they are so entertaining, that I knew not how to leave them. But I would not spend all my time on common topics, while I am paying honor to the memory of an uncommon Christian.

I proceed therefore to the next general head.

### SECTION III.—OF THE VARIOUS KINDS AND DEGREES OF THE EMPLOYMENTS AND PLEASURES OF HEAVEN.

HAVING shewn that by the *spirits of just men* in my text we are to understand the souls of all the pious and the good that have left the body; and having described their perfection as a state of complete knowledge, holiness, and joy; the third thing I am to consider is, what sort of perfection this is, or what are some of the special characters of it. And here I beg your attention to some pleasing speculations which are agreeable to the word of God, and to the nature and reason of things, and which have often given my thoughts a sacred entertainment.

I. It is such a perfection as admits of great variety of employments and pleasures, according to the various turn and genius of each particular spirit. For the word perfection does not necessarily imply a state of universal and constant uniformity.

That the mind of every man here on earth has a different turn of genius, and peculiar manner of thought, is evident to every wise observer. And why should not every pious mind or spirit carry to heaven with it so much of that turn and manner as is natural and innocent? I grant it is a possible thing, that many different geniuses of men on earth may perhaps be accounted for by the different constitution of the body, the frame of the brain, and the various texture of the nerves, or may be ascribed to the coarser or finer blood, and corporeal spirits, as well as to different forms of education and custom, &c. These may be able to produce a wonderous variety in the tempers and turns of inclination, even though all souls were originally the same: But I dare not assert that there is no difference betwixt the souls themselves, at their

first creation and union with the body. There are some considerations would lead one to believe, that there are real diversities of genius among the spirits themselves in their own nature.

God, the great Creator, hath seemed to delight himself in a rich variety of productions in all his worlds which we are acquainted with. Let us make a pause here, and stand still and survey the overflowing riches of his wisdom, which are laid out on this little spot of his vast dominions, this earthly globe on which we tread; and we may imagine the same variety and riches overspreading all those upper worlds which we call planets or stars.

What an amazing multiplicity of kinds of creatures dwell on this earth? If we search the animated world and survey it, we shall find there are some that fly, some that creep or slide, and some walk on feet or run; and every sort of animals clothed with a proper covering, some of them more gay and magnificent in their attire than Solomon in all his glory; and each of them furnished with limbs, powers, and properties fitted for their own support, convenience and safety. How various are the kinds of birds and beasts that pass daily before our eyes. The fields and the woods, the forests and the deserts, have their different inhabitants. The savage and the domestic animals how numerous they are! and the fowl both wild and tame! What riches of dress and drapery are provided to clothe them in all their proper habits of nature? What an infinite number of painted insects fill the air, and overspread the ground? What bright spangles adorn their little bodies and their wings when they appear in their summer livery? What interwoven streaks of scarlet beauty mingled with green and gold? We behold a strange profusion of divine wisdom yearly in our own climate in these little animated crumbs of clay, as well as in the animals of larger size. And yet there are multitudes of new strange creatures that we read of in the narratives of foreign countries; and what a vast profusion of entertainments for them all? How are the mountains and meadows adorned with a surprising plenty of grass and herbs, fruits and flowers, almost infinite, for the use of man and meaner animals?

In the world of waters a thousand unknown creatures swim and sport themselves, and leap with excess of life even in the freezing seas. Millions of inhabitants range through that liquid wilderness with swiftest motion, and in the wonders of their frame and nature proclaim the skill of an Almighty Maker. Others of the watery kind are but half alive, and are tossed from place to place by the heaving ocean. Think of the leviathan, the eel, and the oyster, and tell me if God has not shewn a rich variety of contrivance in them:

And as various as their nature is, so various is the means of their life; proper beds of lodging are provided for them, and variety of food suited to uphold every nature.

Mankind is a world of itself, made up of the mingled or united natures of flesh and spirit. What an infinite difference of faces and features among the sons and daughters of men? And how much more various are the turns of their appetites, tempers, and inclinations, their humors and passions? And what glorious employment hath divine wisdom ordained for itself, in framing these millions of creatures with understandings and wills of so inconceivable a variety, so vast a difference of genius and inclination, to be the subjects of its providential government? And what a surprising harmony is there in the immense and incomprehensible scheme of divine counsels, arising from the various stations and businesses of men so infinitely diversified and distinct from one another, and centering in one great end, the divine glory? An amazing contrivance, and a design worthy of God.

Now is the pure intellectual world alone destitute of this delightful variety? Is the nature of spirits utterly incapable of this diversity and beauty, without the aids of flesh and blood? Hath the wisdom of God displayed no riches of contrivance there? And must there be such a dull uniformity no where but in the country where spirits dwell, spirits the noblest parts of God's creation and dominion? Has he poured out all the various glories of divine art and workmanship in the inanimate and brutal or animal world, and left the higher sort of creatures all of one genius, and one turn and mould, to replenish all the intellectual regions? Surely it is hard to believe it.

In the world of angels we find various kinds and orders. St. Paul tells us of *thrones*, and *dominions*, and *principalities*; Col. i. 16. and St. Peter speaks of *angels*, and *authorities*, and *powers*; 1 Pet. iii. 22; and in other parts of the word of God we read the names of an *archangel*, a *seraph*, and a *cherub*. And no doubt, as their degrees and stations in the heavenly world differ from each other, so their talents and genius to sustain those different stations are very various, and exactly suited to their charge and business. And it is no improbable thought, that the souls of men differ from each other as much as angels.

But if there were no difference at first betwixt the turn and genius of different spirits in their original formation, yet this we are sure of, that God designed their habitation in flesh and blood, and their passage through this world as the means to form and fit them for various stations in the unknown world of spirits. The souls of men having dwelt many years in particular bodies, have been influ-

enced, and habituated to particular turns of thought, both according to the various constitutions of those bodies, and the more various studies, and businesses, and occurrences of life. Surely then we may with reason suppose the spirits departing from flesh to carry with them some bent and inclination towards various pleasures and employments. So we may reasonably imagine each sinful spirit that leaves the body, to be more abundantly inflamed with these particular vices which it indulged here, whether ambition, or pride, or covetousness, or malice, or envy, or aversion to God, and to all goodness; and their various sorts of punishments may arise from their own variety of lusts, giving each of them a peculiar inward torment. And why may not the spirits of the just made perfect have the same variety of taste and pleasure in that happy world above, according as they are fitted for various kinds of sacred entertainments in their state of preparation, and during their residence in flesh and blood? *He that hath wrought us for the self-same thing is God;* 2 Cor. v. 5.

In the world of human spirits made perfect, David and Moses dwell: Both of them were trained up in feeding the flocks of their fathers in the wilderness, to feed and to rule the nation of Israel, the chosen flock of God. And may we not suppose them also trained up in the arts of holy government on earth, to be the chiefs of some blessed army, some sacred tribe in heaven? They were directors of the forms of worship in the church below under divine inspiration: And might not that fit them to become leaders of some celestial assembly, when a multitude of the sons of God above come at stated seasons to present themselves before the throne? Both of them knew how to celebrate the praise of their Creator in sacred melody; but David was the chief of mortals in this harmonious work: And may we not imagine that he is or shall be a master of heavenly music, before or after the resurrection, and teach some of the choirs above to tune their harps to *the Lamb that was slain?*

But to come down to more modern times, is there not a Boyle,\* and a Ray,† in heaven? Pious souls who were trained up in sanctified philosophy; and surely they are fitted beyond their fellow-

\* The honorable Robert Boyle, Esq., a most pious enquirer into nature, and an improver of the experimental philosophy.

† Mr. John Ray, one of the ministers ejected for nonconformity, 1662, he employed most of his studies afterwards in the cultivation of natural philosophy, in collections and remarks on the variety of plants, birds, beasts, fishes, &c., and wrote several treatises to improve natural philosophy in the service of religion.

saints, to contemplate the wisdom of God in the works of his hands. Is there not a More,\* and a Howe,† that have exercised their minds in an uncommon acquaintance with the world of spirits? And doubtless their thoughts are refined and improved in the upper world, and yet still engaged in the same pursuit. There is also a Goodwin,‡ and an Owen,§ who have laid out the vigor of their enquiries in the glories and wonders of the person of Christ, his bloody sacrifice, his dying love, and his exalted station at the right hand of God. The first of these, with a penetrating genius, traced out many a new and uncommon thought, and made rich discoveries by digging in the mines of Scripture. The latter of them humbly pursued and confirmed divine truth; and both of them were eminent in promoting faith and piety, spiritual peace and joy, upon the principles of grace and the gospel. Their labors in some of these subjects, no doubt, have prepared them for some correspondent peculiarities in the state of glory. For though the doctrines of the person, the priesthood, and the grace of Christ, are themes which all the glorified souls converse with and rejoice in; yet spirits that have been trained up in them with peculiar delight for forty or fifty years, and devoted most of their time to these blessed contemplations, have surely gained some advantage by it, some peculiar fitness to receive the heavenly illuminations of these mysteries above their fellow-spirits.

There is also the soul of an ancient Eusebius,|| and the later spirits of an Usher,¶ and a Burnet,\*\* who have entertained themselves and the world with the sacred histories of the church, and the wonders of divine providence in its preservation and recovery. There is a Tillotson,†† that has cultivated the subjects of holiness,

\* Dr. Henry More, a great searcher into the world of spirits, and a pious divine of the church of England.

† Mr. John Howe, a name well known and highly honored for his sagacity of thought, his exalted ideas, and converse with the spiritual world, as appears in his writings.

‡ Dr. Thomas Goodwin. And

§ Dr. John Owen, two famous divines of prime reputation among the churches of the last century.

|| Eusebius, one of the fathers of the Christian church, who wrote the history of the primitive ages of Christianity.

¶ Dr. John Usher, in the last century archbishop of Armagh, whose chronological writings and his piety have rendered his name honorable in the world.

\*\* Dr. Gilbert Burnet, late bishop of Salisbury, whose serious religion, and zeal to promote it among the clergy, made him almost as famous as his *History of the English Reformation*.

†† The names of Dr John Tillotson, late archbishop of Canterbury; and of

peace, and love, by his pen and his practice : There is a Baxter,\* that has wrought hard for an end of controversies, and labored with much zeal for the conversion of souls, though with much more success in the last than in the first.

Now though all the spirits in heaven enjoy the general happiness of the love of God and Christ, and the pleasurable review of providence ; yet may we not suppose these spirits have some special circumstances of sacred pleasure, suited to their labors and studies in their state of trial on earth ? For the church on earth is but a training-school for the church on high, and as it were a tiring-room in which we are dressed in proper habits for our appearance and our places in that bright assembly.

But some will reprove me here, and say, what must none but ministers, and authors, and learned men, have their distinguished rewards and glories in the world of spirits ? May not artificers, and traders, and pious women, be fitted by their character and conduct on earth for peculiar stations and employments in heaven ?

Yes doubtless, their zeal for the honor of God, their fervent love to Christ, their patience under long trials, and the variety of their graces exercised according to their stations on earth, may render them peculiarly fitted for special rewards on high : The wisdom of God will not be at a loss to find out distinguishing pleasures to recompense them all ; though where the very station and business of this life is such as makes a nearer approach to the blessedness and business of heaven, it is much easier for us to guess at the nature of that future recompense.

Let me ask my own soul then, “ Soul, what art thou busy about ? What is thy chief employment during thy present state of trial ? I hope thou art not making *provision for the flesh to fulfil the lusts thereof* ; for then thou art fit for no place in heaven, the doors will be for ever shut against thee. But what special works of the Spirit art thou engaged in ? Dost thou redeem what hours thou art able, from necessary businesses of life, to do more immediate service for God, to converse with things heavenly ? Art thou seeking to gain a proper meetness for the sublimer employments of that upper world, and a relish of the most refined pleasures.”

But I proceed to the second particular :

II. The perfection of the spirits above, not only admits of a rich variety of entertainments, according to the various relish and inclination of the blessed, but it is such a perfection as allows of differ-

\* Mr. Richard Baxter, a divine of great note among the Protestant dissenters, need no further paraphrase to make them known.

ent degrees even in the same blessedness, according to the different capacities of spirits, and their different degrees of preparation. The word perfection does not always require equality.

If all the souls in heaven were of one mould, and make, and inclination, yet there may be different sizes of capacity even in the same genius, and a different degree of preparation for the same delights and enjoyments ; therefore though all the spirits of the just were uniform in their natures and pleasures, and all perfect, yet one spirit may possess more happiness and glory than another, because it is more capacious of intellectual blessings, and better prepared for them. So when vessels of various size are thrown into the same ocean, there will be a great difference in the quantity of the liquid which they receive, though all might be full to the brim, and all made of the richest metal.

Now there is much evidence of this truth in the holy Scripture. Our Saviour intimates such differences of rewards in several of his expressions. *Matt. xix. 28.* He promised the apostles, that they *shall sit on twelve thrones, judging the twelve tribes of Israel.* And it is probable, this may denote something of superior honor or dignity above the meanest of the saints. And even among the apostles themselves he seems to allow of a difference ; for though he would not promise James and John to sit next to him, *on his right hand and his left in his kingdom,* *Matt. xx. 20, &c.,* yet he does not deny that there are such distinct dignities, but says, *It shall be given to them for whom it is prepared of his Father ;* verse 23. Again our Lord says, *Matt. x. 41, 42.* *he that receives a prophet, and entertains him as a prophet, shall have a prophet's reward :* and he that entertains a righteous man, agreeable to his character, and from a real esteem of his righteousness, *shall have a righteous man's reward :* And even the meanest sort of entertainment, *a cup of cold water* given to a disciple, for the sake of his character, shall not go without some reward. Here are three sorts or degrees of reward mentioned, extending to the life to come, as well as to this life : Now though neither of them can be merited by works, but all are entirely conferred by grace, yet, as one observes here, “The Lord hath fixed a proportion between the work and the reward ; so that as one has different degrees of goodness, the other shall have different degrees of excellency.”

Our Saviour assures us, that the torments of hell shall admit of various degrees and distinctions ; some will be more exquisite and terrible than others : *It shall be more tolerable for Sodom and Gomorrah in the day of judgment,* who never sinned against half so much light, than it shall be for Chorazin, Bethsaida, and Caper-

naum, where Christ himself had preached his gospel, and confirmed it with most evident miracles; *Matt. xi. 21—24*. And the servants who did not the will of their Lord, shall be beaten with more or fewer stripes, according to their different degrees of knowledge and advantages of instruction; *Luke xii. 47, 48*. Now may we not, by a parallel reasoning, suppose there will be various orders and degrees of reward in heaven, as well as punishment in hell; since there is scarce a greater variety among the degrees of wickedness among sinners on earth, than there is of holiness among the saints?

When the apostle is describing the glories of the body at the great resurrection, he seems to represent the differences of glory that shall be conferred on different saints, by the difference of the great luminaries of heaven; *1 Cor. xv. 41, 42*. *There is one glory of the sun, another glory of the moon, and another glory of the stars; for one star differs from another in glory: So also is the resurrection of the dead.*

The prophet Daniel led the way to this description, and the same Spirit taught the apostle the same language; *Dan. xii. 2, 3*. *And many of them, that sleep in the dust of the earth, shall awake, some to everlasting life, and some to shame and everlasting contempt; and they that be wise shall shine, with common glory, as the brightness of the firmament; and they that turn many to righteousness, shall have a peculiar lustre, as the stars, for ever and ever.* And if there be a difference in the visible glories of the saints at the resurrection, if *those who turn many to righteousness* shall sparkle in that day with brighter beams than those who are only wise for their own salvation, the same reason leads us to believe a difference of spiritual glory in the state of separate spirits, when the recompence of their labors is begun.

So, *1 Cor. iii. 8*. *He that planteth, and he that watereth, are one, and every man shall receive his own reward, according to his own labor.* If all be rewarded alike, the apostle would not have said, each man shall receive according to his own labor. Surely, since there is a distinction of labors, there will be a distinction of rewards too.

And it is with this view that the same apostle exhorts the Corinthians, *1 Epist. xv. 58*. *Therefore, my beloved brethren, be ye steadfast, unmoveable, always abounding in the work of the Lord, for as much as ye know that your labor is not in vain in the Lord.* Now that great labor and diligence, that steadfastness in profession, and that zeal in practice, to which the apostle exhorts them, might

seem to be in vain, if those who were far less laborious, less zealous, and less steadfast, should obtain an equal recompense.

It is upon the same principle that he encourages them to holy patience under afflictive trials; 2 Cor. iv. 17, when he says, *our light affliction, which is but for a moment, worketh for us a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory; while we look not to the things that are seen, and temporal, but to things invisible and eternal.* Now if the saint, who was called to heaven almost as soon as he was made a Christian, and went through no sufferings, should possess the same weight of glory with the martyrs and confessors, under the long and tedious train of cruelties which they sustained from men, or painful trials from the hand of God, I cannot see how their afflictions could be said to work for them *a far more exceeding weight of glory.*

He urges them also to great degrees of liberality from the same motive; 2 Cor. ix. 6. *This I say, he that soweth sparingly, shall reap also sparingly; and he which soweth bountifully, shall also reap bountifully.* Which words may reasonably be construed to signify the blessings of the life to come, as well as the blessings of the present life; for this apostle, speaking of the same duty of liberality, expresses the same encouragement under the same metaphors; Gal. vi. 6, 7, 8, 9. *Let him, that is taught in the word, communicate to him that teacheth in all good things. Be not deceived, God is not mocked; for whatsoever a man soweth, that shall he also reap: For he that soweth to his flesh, shall of the flesh reap corruption; but he that soweth to the spirit, shall of the spirit reap life everlasting. And let us not be weary in well-doing; for in due season we shall reap, if we faint not.* When God distributes the riches of his glory amongst the saints in heaven, he pours them out in a large and bountiful manner upon those who have distributed the good things of this life bountifully to the poor; but he rewards the narrow-souled Christian with a more sparing hand.

With the same design does the apostle encourage Christians to great watchfulness against sin and heresy, as well as ministers to a solicitous care of their doctrine and preaching; 1 Cor. iii. 12—15. *If any man build gold, silver, or precious stones, upon the true foundation Jesus Christ, and raise a glorious superstructure of truth and holiness, he shall receive a reward answerable to his skill and care in building; for his work shall stand, when it is tried by the fire of the judgment-day: But if he build wood, hay, and stubble upon it, evil inferences, and corrupt practices, or trifles, fruitless controversies, idle speculations, and vain ceremonies, his works shall be burnt, and he shall suffer loss, shall obtain a far*

less recompence of his labor: Yet, since he has laid Christ for the foundation, and has taught and practised the fundamental doctrines and duties of Christianity, though mingled with much folly and weakness, *he himself shall be saved; yet in so hazardous a manner as a man that is saved by fire, who loses all his goods, and just escapes with his life.*

When you hear St. Paul or St. John, speaking of the last judgment, they give hints of the same distinction of rewards; 2 Cor. v. 10. *For we must all appear before the judgment-seat of Christ, that every one may receive the things done in his body, according to that he hath done, whether it be good or bad.* Eph. vi. 8. *Whatsoever good thing any man doeth, the same shall he receive of the Lord, whether he be bond or free;* Rev. xxii. 12. *And behold, I come quickly; and my reward is with me, to give every man according as his work shall be.* Though the highest and holiest saint in heaven can claim nothing there by the way of merit, for it is our Lord Jesus Christ alone who has purchased all those unknown blessings, yet he will distribute them according to the different characters and degrees of holiness which his saints possessed on earth; and those larger degrees of holiness were also the free gift of God our Saviour.

I have often represented it to my own thoughts under this comparison. Here is a race appointed; here are a thousand different prizes, purchased by some prince, to be bestowed on the racers: And the prince himself gives them food and wine, according to what proportion he pleases, to strengthen and animate them for the race. Each has a particular stage appointed for him, some of shorter, and some of longer distance. When every racer comes to his own goal, he receives a prize in most exact proportion to his speed, diligence, and length of race: And the grace and the justice of the prince shine gloriously in such a distribution. Not the foremost of the racers can pretend to have merited the prize; for the prizes were all paid for by the prince himself; and it was he that appointed the race, and gave them spirit and strength to run; and yet there is a most equitable proportion observed in the reward, according to the labors of the race. Now this similitude represents the matter so agreeably to the apostle's way of speaking, when he compares the Christian life to a race; 1 Cor. xi. 24, &c. Gal. v. 7. Philip. iii. 14. 2 Tim. iv. 7. Heb. xii. 1. that I think it may be called almost a scriptural description of the present subject.

The reason of man and the light of nature entirely concur with Scripture in this point. The glory of heaven is prepared for those who are prepared for it in a state of grace; Rom. ix. 23. It is

God who makes each of us *meet for our own inheritance among the saints in light*; Col. i. 12. And then he bestows on us that inheritance.

As grace fits the soul for glory, so a larger degree of grace advances and widens the capacity of the soul, and prepares it to receive a larger degree of glory. The work of grace is but the means, the reward of glory is the end: Now the wisdom of God always fits and adjusts the means in a due proportion, to answer the end he designs, and the same wisdom ever makes the end answerable to the means he useth; and therefore he infuses more and higher glories into vessels more enlarged and better prepared.

Some of the spirits in heaven may be trained up by their stations and sacred services on earth for more elevated employments and joys on high. Can we imagine that the soul of David, *the sweet psalmist*, the prophet, and the king of Israel, is not fitted by all his labors and trials, all his raptures of faith, and love, and zeal, for some sublimer devotion and nobler business than his own infant child, the fruit of his adultery? And yet our divines have generally placed this child in heaven, because David ceased to mourn for him at his death, and said that he himself *should go to him*; 2 Sam. xii. 20, 23. *Deborah, the prophetess, judged Israel*, she animated their armies, and sung their victories: Is not Deborah engaged in some more illustrious employment among the heavenly tribes, than good Dorcas may seem to be capable of, whose highest character upon record is, that *she was full of alms-deeds, and made coats and garments for the poor*; Acts ix. 36, 39. And yet perhaps Dorcas is prepared too for some greater enjoyments, some sweeter relish of mercy, or some special taste of the divine goodness above Rahab the harlot; Rahab, whose younger character was lewd and infamous, and the best thing that we read of her is, that her faith under the present terror of the armies of Israel taught her once to cover and conceal their spies: And unless she made great advances afterwards in grace, surely her place is not very high in glory.

The worship of heaven, and the joy that attends it, may be exceedingly different in degrees, according to the different capacity of spirits; and yet all may be perfect and free from sinful defects. Does not the sparrow praise the Lord its Maker upon the ridge of a cottage, chirping in its native perfection? and yet the lark advances in her flight and her song as far above the sparrow, as the clouds are above the house-top.

Surely superior joys and glories must belong to superior powers and services.

Can we think that Abraham and Moses, who were trained up in converse with God *face to face, as a man converses with his friend*, and who followed him through the wilderness and unknown countries in a glorious exercise of faith, were not prepared for a greater intimacy with God, and nearer views of his glory in heaven, than Samson and Jephthah, those rude heroes, who being appointed of God for that service, spent their days in bloody work, in hewing down the Philistines and the Ammonites? For we read little of their acquaintance with God, or converse with him, beside a petition now and then, or a vow for victory and for slaughter; and we should hardly have charity enough to believe they were saved, if St. Paul had not placed them among the examples of faith in his eleventh chapter to the Hebrews. Can we ever believe that the thief upon the cross, who spent his life in plundering and mischief, and made a single though sincere profession of the name of Jesus just in his dying hour, was prepared for the same high station and enjoyment in paradise, so near the right hand of Christ, as the great apostle Paul, whose prayers and sermons, whose miracles of labor and suffering, filled up and finished a long life, and honored his Lord and Saviour more than all the twelve apostles besides? Can we imagine that the child that is just born into this world under the friendly shadow of the covenant of grace, and weeps and dies, and is taken to heaven, is fit to be possessor of the same glories, or raised to the same degree there, as the studious, the laborious, and the zealous Christian, that has lived above fourscore years on earth, and spent the greatest part of his life in the studies of religion, the exercises of piety, and the zealous and painful services of God and his country? Surely, if all these which I have named must have equal knowledge and joy in the future world, it is hard to find how such an exact equity shall be displayed in the distribution of final rewards, as the word of God so frequently describes.

*Objection.* But in the parable of the laborers hired to work in the vineyard, *Matt. xx. 9, 12.* does not every man receive his penny, they who were called at the first and third hour, and they who were called at the last? Were not their rewards all equal, *those who had wrought but one hour, and those who had borne the burden and heat of the day?*

*Answer.* It is not the design of this parable to represent the final rewards of the saints at the day of judgment, but to shew that the nation of the Jews, who had been called to be the people of God above a thousand years before, and had borne the burden and heat of the day, that is, the toil and bondage of many ceremonies, should have no preference in the esteem of God above the

gentiles, who were called at the last hour, or at the end of the Jewish dispensation ; for it is said, verse 16, *the last shall be first, and the first last* ; that is, the gentiles, who waited long ere the gospel was preached to them, shall be the first in receiving it ; and the Jews, to whom it was first offered, from an inward scorn and pride shall reject it, or receive it but slowly : And Christ adds this confirmation of it, *for many be called, but few chosen* ; that is, though multitudes of Jews were called to believe in Christ, that few accepted the call.

There is another reason why this parable cannot refer to the final rewards of heaven ; because, verse 11, it is said, Some of them *murmured against the good man of the house*. Now there shall be no envy against their fellow-saints, nor murmuring against God in the heavenly state. But the Jews, and even the Jewish converts to Christianity, were ready often to murmur that the gospel should be preached to the gentile world, and that the heathens should be brought into privileges equal to themselves.

Thus it sufficiently appears, from the frequent declarations of Scripture, as well as from the reason and equity of things, that the rewards of the future world shall be greatly distinguished, according to the different degrees of holiness and service for God, even though every spirit there shall be perfect; nor is there any just and reasonable objection against it.

Is it certain then that heaven has various degrees of happiness in it, and shall my spirit rest contented with the meanest place there, and the least and lowest measure ? Hast thou no sacred ambition in thee, O my soul, to sit down with Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob ? Or dost thou not aspire, at least, to the middle ranks of glorified saints, though perhaps thou mayest despair of those most exalted stations which are prepared for the spirits of chief renown, for Abraham and Moses of ancient time, and for the martyrs and the apostles of the Lamb ? Wilt thou not stir up all the vigor of nature and grace within thee, to do great service for thy God and thy Saviour on earth, that thy reward in heaven may not be small ? Wilt thou not *run with zeal and patience the race that is set before thee*, looking to the brightest cloud of witnesses, and reaching at some of the richer prizes ? Remember that Jesus thy Judge is coming apace : He has rewards with him of every size, and the lustre and weight of thy crown shall most exactly correspond to thy sweat and labor.

But I must not dwell always on this head : I proceed therefore to the next.

III. The spirits of the just in heaven enjoy such a perfection as

is consistent with perpetual changes of business and delights, even in the same person or spirit. They may be always perfect, but in a rich and endless variety.

It is only God who possesses all possible excellencies, and powers, and happinesses at once, and therefore he alone is incapable of change: But creatures must possess and enjoy their delights in a succession, because they cannot possess and enjoy all that they are capable of at once. And according to this consideration, the heavenly state is represented in Scripture in various forms, both of business and blessedness.

Sometimes it is described by *seeing God*; Matt. v. 8. by *beholding him face to face*; 1 Cor. xiii. 12. by being *present with the Lord*; 2 Cor. v. 8. by being where Christ *is to behold his glory*; John xvii. 24. Sometimes the saints above are said *to serve him* as his servants; Rev. xxii. 3. Sometimes they are represented as worshipping before the throne, as being fed with the fruits of the tree of life, and drinking the living fountains of water; Rev. vii. 15, 17. and xxii. 1, 2. And let it be noted, that *twelve manner of fruits* grew on this tree, and they were new *every month* also. Sometimes they are held forth to us as *singing a new song to God, and to the Lamb*; Rev. xiv. 3. And at another time they are described as wearing *a crown of righteousness* and glory, of sitting on the throne of Christ, of *reigning for ever and ever, and ruling the nations with a rod of iron*; 2 Tim. iv. 8. 1 Pet. v. 4. Rev. xxii. 5. Rev. ii. 26, 27. And in another place, our happiness is represented as sitting down with Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, in the kingdom of heaven; Matt. viii. 11. Now surely this rich variety of language, whereby the heavenly state is proposed to us in Scripture, must intend a variety of entertainments and employments, that may in some measure answer the glory of such expressions.

It is not only the powers of our understanding that shall be regaled and feasted in those happy regions with the blissful vision of God and Christ, but our active powers shall doubtless have their proper entertainments too. When angels are so variously and delightfully employed in service for God, in his several known and unknown worlds, we cannot suppose the spirits of just men shall be eternally confined to a sedentary state of inactive contemplation.

Contemplation indeed is a noble pleasure, and the joy of it rises high when it is fixed on the sublimest objects, and when the faculties are all exalted and refined. But surely such a sight of God and our dear Redeemer, as we shall enjoy above, will awaken and animate all the active and sprightly powers of the soul, and

set all the springs of love and zeal at work in the most illustrious instances of unknown and glorious duty,

I confess heaven is described as a place of rest, that is, rest from sin and sorrow, rest from pain and weariness, rest from all the toilsome labors and conflicts that we endure in a state of trial; but it can never be such a rest as lays all our active powers asleep, or renders them useless in such a vital and active world. It would diminish the happiness of the saints in glory to be unemployed there. Those spirits who have tasted unknown delight and satisfaction in many long seasons of devotion, and in a thousand painful services for their blessed Lord on earth, can hardly bear the thoughts of paying no active duties, doing no work at all for him in heaven, where business is all over delight, and labor is all enjoyment. Surely *his servants shall serve him* there, as well as worship him. They shall serve him perhaps as priests in his temple, and as kings, or viceroys, in his wide dominions; for they *are made kings and priests unto God for ever*; Rev. v. 10.

But let us dwell a little upon their active employments, and perhaps a close and attentive meditation may lead us into an unexpected view and notice of their sacred commissions and embassies, their governments, and their holy conferences, as well as their acts of worship and adoration.

That heaven is a place or state of worship, is certain, and beyond all controversy; for this is a very frequent description of it in the word of God. And as the great God has been pleased to appoint different forms of worship to be practised by his saints, and his churches under the different economies of his grace, so it is possible he may appoint peculiar forms of sacred magnificence to attend his own worship in the state of glory. Bowing the knee, and prostration of the body, are forms and postures of humility practised by earthly worshippers. Angels cover their faces and their feet with their wings, and cry, *holy, holy, holy, Lord God of hosts!* Isaiah, vi. 2, 3. But what unknown and illustrious forms shall be consecrated by the appointment and authority of Christ for the un-bodied or the bodied saints in heaven to adorn their sacred offices, is above our reach to describe or to imagine.

Let us consider now what parts of worship the blessed are employed in.

The various parts of divine worship that are practised on earth, at least such as are included in natural religion, shall doubtless be performed in heaven too; and what other unknown worship of positive and celestial appointment shall belong to the heavenly

state, is as much above our present conjecture, as the forms of it are.

Heaven is represented as full of praises. There is the most glorious and perfect celebration of God the Father and the Saviour in the upper world: And the highest praise is offered to them with the deepest humility. The crowns of glory are cast down at their feet, and all the powers and perfections of God, with all his labors of creation, his cares of providence, and the sweeter mysteries of his grace, shall furnish noble matter for divine praise. This work of praise is also exhibited in Scripture, as attended with a song and heavenly melody. What there is in the world of separate spirits to answer the representations of harps and voices, we know not. It is possible that spirits may be capable of some sort of harmony in their language, without a tongue, and without an ear; and there may be some inimitable and transporting modulations of divine praise, without the material instruments of string or wind. The soul itself, by some philosophers, is said to be mere harmony; and surely then it will not wait for it till the body be raised from the dust, nor live so long destitute of all melodious joys, or of that spiritual pleasure which shall supply the place of melody, till our organs of sense shall be restored to us again.

But is all heaven made up of praises? Is there no prayer there? Let us consider a little: What is prayer, but the desire of a created spirit, in an humble manner made known to its Creator? Does not every saint above desire to know God, to love and serve him, to be employed for his honor, and to enjoy the eternal continuance of his love and its own felicity? May not each happy spirit in heaven exert these desires in a way of solemn address to the divine Majesty? May not the happy soul acknowledge its dependence in this manner upon its Father and its God? Is there no place in the heart of a glorified saint for such humble addresses as these? Does not every separate spirit there look and long for the resurrection, when it is certain that embodied spirits on earth who have *received the first-fruits of grace and glory, groan within themselves, waiting for the redemption of the body?* Rom. viii. 23. And may we not suppose each holy soul sending a sacred and fervent wish after this glorious day, and lifting up a desire to its God about it, though without the uneasiness of a sigh or a groan? May it not, under the influence of divine love, breathe out the requests of its heart, and the expressions of its zeal for the glory and kingdom of Christ? May not the church above join with the church below in this language, *Father, thy kingdom come, thy will be done on earth as it is in heaven?* Are not the souls of the martyrs that were slain repre-

sented to us as under the altar, crying with a loud voice, *how long, O Lord, holy and true?* Rev. vi. 9, 10. This looks like the voice of prayer in heaven.

Perhaps you will suppose there is no such service as hearing sermons, that there is no attendance upon the word of God there. But are we sure there are no such entertainments? Are there no lectures of divine wisdom and grace given to the younger spirits there, by spirits of a more exalted station? Or may not our Lord Jesus Christ himself be the everlasting teacher of his church? May he not, at solemn seasons, summon all heaven to hear him publish some new and surprising discoveries, which have never yet been made known to the ages of nature or of grace, and are reserved to entertain the attention, and exalt the pleasure of spirits advanced to glory? Must we learn all by the mere contemplation of Christ's person? Does he never make use of speech to the instruction and joy of saints above?

Moses and Elijah came down once from heaven to make a visit to Christ on mount Tabor, and the subject of their converse with him was his death and departure from this world; *Luke ix. 31.* Now since our Lord is ascended to heaven, are these holy souls cut off from this divine pleasure? Is Jesus for ever silent? Does he converse with his glorified saints no more? And surely if he speak, the saints will hear and attend.

Or it may be that our blessed Lord, even as he is man, has some noble and unknown way of communicating a long discourse, or a long train of ideas and discoveries to millions of blessed spirits at once, without the formalities of voice and language; and at some peculiar seasons he may thus instruct and delight his saints in heaven. Thus it appears there may be something among the spirits of the just above, that is analogous to prayer and preaching, as well as praise. O how gustful are the pleasures of celestial worship! What unknown varieties of performance, what sublime ministrations there are, and glorious services, none can tell. And in all this variety, which may be performed in sweet succession, there is no wandering thought, no cold affection, no divided heart, no listless or indifferent worshipper. What we call rapture and ecstasy here on earth, is perhaps the constant and uninterrupted pleasure of the church on high in all their adorations.

But let the worship of the glorified spirits be never so various, yet I cannot persuade myself that mere direct acts or exercises of what we properly call worship, are their only and everlasting work. The Scripture tells us, there are certain seasons when the angels, those sons of God, came to present themselves before the Lord;

*Job i. 6, and ii. 1.* It is evident then, that the intervals of these seasons are spent in other employments: And when they present themselves before God, it does not sufficiently appear that mere adoration and praise is their only business at the throne. In the very place which I have cited, it seems more natural to suppose, that these angelic spirits came thither rather to render an account of their several employments, and the success of their messages to other worlds. And why may we not suppose such a blessed variety of employment among the spirits of men too?

This supposition has some countenance in the holy Scripture. The angel or messenger who appeared to St. John, and showed him various visions, by the order of Christ, forbids the apostle to worship him, *for I am thy fellow-servant, said he, and of thy brethren the prophets, and of them which keep the sayings of this book;* Rev. xxii. 8, 9. These words naturally lead one to think, that though he appeared as a messenger from Christ, and in the form of an angel, yet he was really a departed saint, a brother, a fellow-prophet, perhaps the soul of David, or Isaiah, or Moses, who would count it an honor, even in their state of glory, to be thus employed by their exalted Lord; and they also keep or observe, and wait for the accomplishment of the sayings of that book or the Revelations, as well as the churches of the brethren, the saints on earth.

I freely allow immediate divine worship to take up a good part of their everlasting day, their sabbath; and therefore I suppose them to be often engaged, millions at once, in social worship; and sometimes acting apart, and raised in sublime meditation of God, or in a fixed vision of his blissful face, with an act of secret adoration, while their intellectual powers are almost lost in sweet amazement: Sometimes they are entertaining themselves and their fellow-spirits with the graces and glories of the man Christ Jesus, *the Lamb that was slain, in the midst of the throne;* But at other times they may be making a report to him of their faithful execution of some divine commission they received from him, to be fulfilled either in heaven or in earth, or in unknown and distant worlds.

There may be other seasons also when they are not immediately addressing the throne, but are most delightfully engaged in recounting to each other the wondrous steps of providence, wisdom, and mercy, that seized them from the very borders of hell and despair, and brought them through a thousand dangers and difficulties to the possession of that fair inheritance. When the great God shall unravel the scheme of his own counsels, shall unfold every

part of his mysterious conduct, and set before them the reason of every temptation they grappled with, and of every sorrow they felt here on earth, and with what divine and successful influence they all wrought together to train them up for heaven, what matter of surprising delight and charming conversation shall this furnish the saints with in that blessed world? And now and then, in the midst of their sacred dialogues, by a sympathy of soul they shall shout together in sweet harmony, and join their exalted songs to *him that sits upon the throne and to the Lamb.* “*Not unto us, O Lord, not unto us,* but to thy power, to thy wisdom, and to thine abounding mercy, be renown and honor to everlasting ages.”

Nor is it improper or unpleasant to suppose, that among the rest of their celestial conferences, they shall shew each other the fair and easy solution of those difficulties and deep problems in divinity, which had exercised and perplexed them here on earth, and divided them into little angry parties. They shall look back with holy shame on some of their learned and senseless distinctions, and be ready to wonder sometimes what trifles and impertinences had engaged them in dark and furious disputes. Darkness and entanglement shall vanish at once from many of those knotty points of controversy, when they behold them in the light of heaven: And the rest of them shall be matter of delightful instruction for superior spirits to bestow upon those of lower rank, or on souls lately arrived at the regions of light. In short, there is nothing written in the books of nature, the records of providence, or the sacred volumes of grace, but may minister materials at special seasons for the holy conference of the saints on high. No history nor prophecy, no doctrine nor duty, no command nor promise, nor threatening in the Bible, but may recal the thoughts of the heavenly inhabitants, and engage them in sweet conversation. All things that relate to the affairs of past ages and past worlds, as well as the present regions of light and happiness where they dwell, may give them new themes of dialogue and mutual intercourse.

And though we are very little acquainted, whilst we are on earth, with any of the planetary worlds besides that which we inhabit, yet who knows how our acquaintance may be extended hereafter, amongst the inhabitants of the various and distant globes? And what frequent and swift journeys we may take thither, when we are disengaged of this load of flesh and blood, or when our bodies are raised again, active and swift as sunbeams? Sometimes we may entertain our holy curiosity there, and find millions of new discoveries of divine power and divine contrivance in those un-

known regions; and bring back from thence new lectures of divine wisdom, or tidings of the affairs of those provinces, to entertain our fellow-spirits, and to give new honors to God the Creator and the Sovereign. So a pious traveller in our lower world visits Africa or both the Indies: At his return he sits in a circle of attentive admirers, and recounts to them the wondrous products of those climates, and the customs and manners of those distant countries: He gratifies their curiosity with some foreign varieties, and feasts their eyes and their ears at once: Then at the end of every story he breaks out into holy language, and adores the various riches and wisdom of God the Creator.

To proceed yet one step farther. Since there are different degrees of glory, we may infer a variety of honors as well as delights prepared for the spirits of the just made perfect.

Some part of the happiness of heaven is described in Scripture by crowns and thrones, by royalty and kingly honors: Why may we not then suppose that such souls, whose sublimer graces have prepared them for such dignity and office, may *rule the nations*, even in a literal sense? Why may not those spirits that have passed their trials in flesh and blood, and come off conquerors, why may they not sometimes be appointed visitors and superintendants over whole provinces of intelligent beings in lower regions, who are yet laboring in their state of probation? or perhaps they may be exalted to a presidency over inferior ranks of happy spirits, may shine bright amongst them as the morning star, and lead on their holy armies to celestial work or worship. The Scripture itself gives us a hint of such employments in the angelic world, and such presidencies over some parts of our world, or of their own. Do we not read of Gabriel and Michael, and their management of the affairs of Persia, and Greece, and Judah, in the book of Daniel? And it is an intimation of the same hierarchy, when some superior angel led on *a multitude of the heavenly host* to sing a hymn of praise at Bethlehem, when the Son of God was born there; *Luke ii. 9, 13*. Now if angels are thus dignified, may not human spirits unbodied have the same office? Our Saviour, when he rewards the faithful servant that had *gained ten pounds*, bids him take *authority over ten cities*; and he that had gained *five, had five cities* under his government; *Luke xix. 17, &c.* So that this is not a mere random thought, or a wild invention of fancy, but patronised by the word of God.

Among the pleasures and engagements of the upper world, there shall be always something new and entertaining; for the works and the dominions of God are vast beyond all our comprehen-

hension. And what a perpetual change, what a glorious but improving rotation of businesses and joys shall succeed one another through the ages of eternity, we shall never know till we come among them. This thought leads me to the last particular, *viz.*

IV. The perfection which the blessed spirits enjoy, gives room for large additions and continual improvement.

Their knowledge and their joy may be called perfect, because there is no mixture of error or sorrow with it; and because it is sufficient every moment for the satisfaction of present desires, without an uneasiness of mind. But it may be doubted whether any creature ever was, or ever will be so perfect, that it is not capable of addition or growth in any excellency or enjoyment.

The man Christ Jesus, in his present glorified state, has not such a perfection as this. He waits daily to see his Father's promises fulfilled to him; he waits *till all things are put under him, and his enemies be made his actual footstool*: But we know that *all things are not yet put under him*; Heb. ii. 8, that is, all the nations are not yet subject to his spiritual kingdom, nor become obedient to his gospel. As fast as his kingdom grows on earth, so fast his honors and his joys arise; and he waits still for the complete union of all his members to himself the sacred head: He waits for the morning of the resurrection, when he shall *be glorified in the bright and general assembly of his saints, and admired in all them that believe*; 2 Thess. i. 10.

O that illustrious and magnificent appearance! That shining hour of jubilee, when the bodies of millions of saints shall awake out of the dust, and be released from their long dark prison! When they shall encompass and adore Jesus their Saviour and their God, and acknowledge their new life and immortal state to be owing to his painful and shameful death: When Noah, Abraham, and David, and all his pious progenitors, shall bow and worship Jesus their Son and their Lord: When the holy army of martyrs, springing from the dust with palms of victory in their hands, shall ascribe their conquest and their triumph *to the Lamb that was slain*: When he shall *present his whole church before the presence of his own and his Father's glory, without spot, and faultless, with exceeding joy!* Can we imagine that Christ himself, even the man Jesus, in the midst of all this magnificence and these honors, shall feel no new satisfaction, and have no relish of all this joy, above what he possessed while his church lay bleeding on earth, and this illustrious company were buried under ground in the chains of death? And yet you will say Christ in heaven is made perfect in knowledge and in joy, but his perfection admits of improvement.

Now if the head be not above the capacity of all growth and addition, surely the members cannot pretend to it. But I shall propose several more arguments for this truth in the following section.

#### SECTION IV.—OF THE INCREASE OF THE SAINTS ABOVE IN KNOWLEDGE, HOLINESS, AND JOY.

THAT there is, and hath been, and will be continual progress and improvement in the knowledge and joy of separate souls, may be easily proved many ways, *viz.*, from the very nature of human reason itself; from the narrowness, the weakness and limitation even of our intellectual faculties in their best estate; from the immense variety of objects that we shall converse about; from our peculiar concern in some future providences, which it is not likely we should know before they occur; and from the glorious new scenes of the resurrection.

1. We may prove the increase of knowledge amongst the blessed above, from the very nature of human reason itself, which is a faculty of drawing inferences, or some new propositions and conclusions, from propositions or principles which we knew before. Now surely we shall not be dispossessed of this power when we come to heaven. What we learn of God there, and the glories of his nature, or his works, will assist and incline us to draw inferences for his honor, and for our worship of him. And if we could be supposed to have never so many propositions, or new principles of knowledge, crowded into our minds at the first entrance into heaven, yet surely our reasoning faculty would still be capable of making some advance by way of inference, or building some superstructure upon so noble a foundation. And who knows the intense pleasure that will arise perpetually to a contemplative mind, by a progressive and infinite pursuit of truth in this manner, where we are secure against the danger of all error and mistake, and every step we take is all light and demonstration.

Shall it be objected here, that our reason shall be, as it were, lost and dissolved in intuition and immediate sight, and therefore it shall have no room or place in that happy world?

To this I would reply, that we shall have indeed much more acquaintance with spiritual objects by immediate intuition, than we ever had here on earth; but it does not follow thence, that we shall lose our reason. Angels have immediate vision of God and divine things; but can we suppose they are utterly incapable of drawing an inference, either for the improvement of their knowledge, or the direction of their practice? When they behold

any special and more curious piece of divine workmanship, can they not further infer the exquisite skill or wisdom of the Creator? And are they not capable of concluding, that this peculiar instance of divine wisdom demands an adoring thought? Thus intuition, or immediate sight in a creature, does not utterly exclude and forbid the use of reason.

I reply again, can it ever be imagined, that being released from the body, we shall possess in one moment, and retain through every moment of eternity, all the innumerable ranks, and orders, and numbers of propositions, truths and duties, that may be derived in a long succession of ages by the use of our reasoning powers? But this leads me to the second argument, *viz.*

2. The weakness and narrowness of human understandings, in their best estate, seem to make it necessary that knowledge should be progressive.

Continual improvement in knowledge and delight among the spirits of the just made perfect, is necessary for the same reason that proved their variety of entertainments and pleasures, *viz.*, because creatures cannot take in all the vast, the infinite variety of conceptions in the full brightness and perfection of them at once, of which they are capable in a sweet succession. Can we ever persuade ourselves, that all the endless train of thoughts, and ideas, and scenes of joy, that shall ever pass through the mind of a saint through the long ages of eternity, should be crowded into every single mind, the first moment of its entrance into those happy regions? And is a human mind spacious enough to receive, and strong enough to retain such an infinite multitude of ideas for ever? Or, *is this the manner of God's working among his intellectual creatures?* Surely God knows our frame, and pours in light and glory as we are able to bear it. Such a bright confusion of notions, images, and transports, would probably overwhelm the most exalted spirit, and drown all the noble faculties of the mind at once. As if a man who was born blind, should be healed in an instant, and should open his eyes first against the full blaze of the noon-day sun; this would so agitate the spirits, and confound the organs of sight, as to reduce the man back again to his first blindness, and perhaps might render him incurable for ever.

3. This argument will be much strengthened, if we do but take a short view of the vast and incomprehensible variety of objects that may be proposed to our minds in the future state, and may feast our contemplation, and improve our joy.

The blessed God himself is an infinite being: His perfections and glories are unbounded: His wisdom, his holiness, his goodness,

his faithfulness, his power and justice, his all-sufficiency, his self-origination, and his unfathomable eternity, have such a number of rich ideas belonging to each of them, that no creature shall ever fully understand. Yet it is but reasonable to believe, that he will communicate so much of himself to us by degrees, as he sees necessary for our business and blessedness in that upper world. Can it be supposed that we should know every thing that belongs to God all at once, which he may discover to us gradually as our capacities improve? Can we think that an infant soul, that had no time for improvement here, when it enters into heaven shall know every thing concerning God, that it can ever attain to through all the ages of its immortality? When a blessed spirit has dwelt in heaven a thousand years, and conversed with God and Christ, angels and fellow-spirits, during all that season, shall it know nothing more of the nature and wondrous properties of God, than it knew the first moment of its arrival there?\*

But I add further, the works of God shall doubtless be the matter of our search and delightful survey, as well as the nature and properties of God himself. *His works are honorable and glorious, and sought out of all that have pleasures in them;* Psalm cxii. 2, 3, In his works we shall read his name, his properties, and his glories, whether we fix our thoughts on creation or providence.

The works of God and his wonders of creation in the known and unknown worlds, both as to the number, the variety, the vastness of them, are almost infinite; that is, they transcend all the limits of our ideas, and all our present capacities to conceive. Now there is none of these works of wonder, but may administer some entertainment to the mind of man, and may richly furnish him with new matter for the praise of God in the long successions of eternity.

There is scarce an animal of the more complete kind, but would entertain an angel with rich curiosities, and feed his contemplation for an age. What a rich and artful structure of flesh upon the solid and well-compacted foundation of bones! What curious joints and hinges, on which the limbs are moved to and fro! What an inconceivable variety of nerves, veins, arteries, fibres, and little invisible parts, are found in every member! What various fluids, blood and juices, run through and agitate the innumerable slender tubes, the hollow tubes and strainers of the body! What

\* God himself hath infinite goodness in him, which the creature cannot take in at once; they are taking of it in eternally. The saints see in God still things fresh, which they saw not in the beginning of their blessedness.

—Dr. T. Goodwin.

millions of folding doors are fixed within, to stop those red or transparent rivulets in their course, either to prevent their return backwards, or else as a means to swell the muscles and move the limbs! What endless contrivances to secure life, to nourish nature, and to propagate the same to future animals! What amazing lengths of holy meditation would an angel run upon these subjects! And what sublime strains of praise would a heavenly philosopher raise hourly to the Almighty and All-wise Creator! And all this from the mere brutal world!

But if we survey the nature of man, he is a creature made up of mind and animal united, and would furnish still more numerous and exalted materials for contemplation and praise; for he has all the richest wonders of animal nature in him, besides the unknown mysteries of mind or spirit. Surely it will create a sacred pleasure in happy souls above, to learn the wonders of divine skill exerted and shining in their own formation, and in the curious workmanship of those bodily engines in which they once dwelt and acted.

Then let them descend to herbs and plants. How numerous are all the products of earth upon her green surface, and all within her dark bowels! All the vegetable and the mineral kingdoms! How many centuries would all these entertain a heavenly enquirer!

The worlds of air, and the worlds of water, the planetary and the starry worlds, are still new objects rich with curiosities; these are all monuments of divine wisdom, and fit subjects for the contemplation of the blessed. Nor can we be supposed to have for ever done with them all when we leave this body, and that for two reasons: One is, because God has never yet received the honor due to his wisdom and power, displayed in the material creation, from the hands or tongues of men. And the other is, because *the spirits of the just* shall be joined to bodies again, and then they shall certainly have necessary converse with God's material works and worlds; though perhaps they have more acquaintance with them now in their separate state than we are apprised of.

And besides all these material works of God, what an unknown variety of other wonders belong to the world of pure spirits which lie hid from us, and are utterly concealed behind the veil of flesh and blood! What are their natures, and the reach of their powers! What ranks and orders they are distributed into! What are their governments, their several employments, the different customs and manners of life in the various and most extensive regions of that intellectual world! What are their messages to our earth, or the other habitable globes, and what capacities they are endowed with to move or influence animate or inanimate bodies! All these, and

a thousand more of the like nature, are made known doubtless to the inhabitants of heaven. These are things that belong to the provinces of light and immortality, but many of them are mysteries to us who dwell in these tabernacles; they lie far beyond our ken, and are wrapped up in sacred darkness, that we can hardly do so much as shoot a guess at them.

Now can we suppose that the meanest spirit in heaven has a full and entire survey of all these innumerable works of God, from the first moment of its entrance thither, throughout all the ages of immortality, without the change of one idea, or the possibility of any improvement? This would be to give a sort of omniscience to every happy spirit, which is more than is generally allowed to the man Christ Jesus. And if there be such a thing as degrees of glory among the saints above, we may be well assured that the lowest rank of blessed spirits is not advanced to this amazing degree.

Is there *no new thing*, neither *under nor above the sun*, that God can entertain any of his children with in the upper world, throughout the infinite extent of all future ages? Are they all made at once so much like God as to know all things? Or if each of them have their stinted size of knowledge, or their limited number of ideas at their first release from their body, then they are everlasting-ly cut off from all the surprises of pleasure that arise from new thoughts, and new scenes, and new discoveries. Does every saint in heaven read God's great volume of nature through and through the first hour it arrives there? Or is each spirit confined to a certain number of leaves, and bound eternally to learn nothing new, but to review perpetually his own limited lesson? Dares he not, or can he not, turn over another leaf, and read his Creator's name in it, and adore his wisdom in new wonders of contrivance? These things are improbable to such a high degree, that I dare almost pronounce them untrue.

The book of providence is another volume wherein God writes his name too. Has every single saint such a vast and infinite length of foreknowledge given him at his first admission into glory, that he knows beforehand all the future scenes of providence, and the wonders which God shall work in the upper and lower worlds? I thought the *lion of the tribe of Judah, the root and the offspring of David*, had been the only person *in heaven or earth that was worthy to take the book, and loose the seven seals thereof*; Rev. v. 5. Surely the meanest of the saints does not foreknow all those great and important counsels of God which our Lord Jesus Christ is entrusted with. And yet we may venture to say, that the spirits

of the just in heaven shall know those great and important events that relate to the church on earth, as they arise in successive seasons, that they may give to God, and to his Son Jesus Christ revenues of due honor upon this account, as I shall prove immediately.

And indeed if the limits of their knowledge in heaven were so fixed at their first entrance there, that they could never be acquainted with any of these successive providences of God afterwards, we here on earth have a great advantage above them, who see daily the accomplishment of his divine counsels, and adore the wonders of his wisdom and his love; and from this daily increase of knowledge we take our share in the growing joys and blessings of Zion.

But this thought leads me to the fourth argument for the increase of knowledge in heaven.

4. There have been, and there are, many future providences on earth, and transactions in heaven, in which the spirits of the just have a very great and dear concernment, and therefore they must know them when they come to pass; and yet it is by no means probable, that they are known in all their glorious circumstances beforehand by every spirit in heaven.

Let us descend a little to some particular instances, and see whether we cannot make it appear from Scripture, with most convincing evidence, that the saints in heaven obtain some additions to their knowledge, by the various new transactions in heaven and in earth.

When our blessed Lord had fulfilled his state of sorrows and sufferings on earth, and ascended into heaven in his glorified human nature, with all the scars of honor, and the ensigns of victory about him; when the Lamb appeared in the midst of the throne with the marks of slaughter and death upon him, and presented himself before God in the midst of angels and ancient patriarchs, with the accomplishment of all the types and promises about him written in letters of blood; did not those blessed angels, did not the spirits of those patriarchs, learn something more of the mysteries of our redemption, and the wondrous glories of the Redeemer, than what they were acquainted with before? And did not this new glorious scene spread new ideas, new joys and wonders through all the heavenly world? Can the principalities and powers in heavenly places gain by the church on earth any farther discoveries of *the manifold wisdom of God?* Eph. iii. 10. And can we believe that when Christ, the head of the church, entered into heaven in so illustrious a manner, that these powers, principalities,

and blessed spirits, got no brighter discoveries of divine wisdom ? To what purpose do *they look and pry into these things*, 1 Pet. i. 12, if after all their searches they make no advances in knowledge ? And must angels be the only proficients in these sublime sciences, while human spirits make no improvement ? Can it be supposed that those ancient fathers, Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, to whom the promises were made, *that all the nations should be blessed in their seed*, had no transporting pleasures when they first beheld that promised seed crowned with all his glory ; when they saw their Son Jesus *ascending on high, and leading captivity captive*, and *the chariots of God* that attended him were *twenty thousand*, even an innumerable company of angels ; *Psalm lxviii. 17, 18.*

If upon this occasion we may talk in the language of mortals, may we not suppose those ancient fathers raising themselves on high, and overlooking the walls of paradise, to gaze downward upon this ascending triumph ? May we not imagine them speaking thus to each other in the holy transport : “And is this our great descendant ? Is this our long-expected offspring ? How divine his aspect ! How godlike his air ! How glorious and adorable all the graces of his countenance ! Is this, saith holy David, my Son and my Lord ? the king of glory, for whose admission I called the gates of heaven *to be lifted up, and opened the everlasting doors* for him in an ancient song ? Is this the man whose hands and whose feet they pierced on earth, as I once foretold by the spirit of prophecy ? I see those blessed scars of honor ; how they adorn his glorified limbs ! I acknowledge and adore my God and my Saviour. I begun his triumph once on my harp in a lower strain, and I behold him now ascending on high : *Awake my glory*, he comes, he comes, with the sound of a trumpet, and with the pomp of shouting angels ; *sing praises, all ye saints, unto our God, sing praises, unto our king, sing praises.* Is this, saith Isaiah, the child born of whom I spoke ? Is this *the Son given* of whom I prophesied ? I adore him as the *mighty God, the Father of ages, and the Prince of peace.* I see the righteous branch, adds the prophet Jeremy, the righteous branch from the stem of David, from the root of Jesse. This is the king whom I foretold *should reign in righteousness* : The Lord my righteousness is his name, I rejoice at his appearance, the throne of heaven is made ready for him. This, saith Daniel, is the *Messiah, the Prince*, who was *cut off, but not for himself* : The *seventy weeks* are all fulfilled, and the work is done. *He hath finished transgression, and made an end of sin, and hath brought in everlasting righteousness for all his people.* But was this the person, saith Zachary the prophet, whom they

sold for *thirty pieces of silver*? Vile indignity and impious madness! Behold he now appears like the man who is *fellow*, or companion to the *Lord of hosts*. It is he, saith Malachi, it is he, *the messenger of the covenant*, who came suddenly to his own temple. There I held him in my withered arms, saith aged Simeon, and rapture and prophecy came upon me at once, and I expired in joy and praises.

And we hope our mother Eve stood up among the rest of them, and beheld and confessed *the promised seed* of the woman. "O blessed Saviour, that didst break *the head of the serpent*, though thy *heel was bruised*, and hast abolished the mischief that my folly and his temptation had brought into thy new created world!"

Now could we ever suppose all this to be done in the upper regions, with no new smiles upon the countenances of the saints, no special increase of joy among *the spirits of the just made perfect*? God himself stands in no need of the magnificence of these transactions: Christ Jesus receives the new honors, and all the old inhabitants of heaven taste new and unknown satisfaction in the honors they pay to their exalted Saviour. Some of the ancients were of opinion, that the souls of the fathers before the ascension of Christ were not admitted into the holy of holies, or the blissful vision of God; but that it was our Lord Jesus, our great High-priest, at his ascent to the throne, led the way thither: He rent the veil of the lower heaven, and carried with him the armies of the patriarchal souls into some upper and brighter, and more joyful regions, whereas before they were only admitted into a state of peace and rest. Whether this be so or no the Scripture does not sufficiently declare: But whatsoever region of heaven they were placed in, we may be well assured, from the very nature of things, that such transactions as the triumphant ascent of Christ, could never pass through any of the upper worlds without enlarging the knowledge and the joy of the blessed inhabitants.

When our Lord Jesus Christ sat down at the right hand of God, he *prevailed to open that book* of divine counsels and decrees, *Rev. v. 5.* and to acquaint himself with all the contents: And this was necessary that he might manage and govern the affairs of the church and the world in the several successive ages, according to the counsels of the Father. He therefore, and he alone among creatures, *knows the end from the beginning*, as I hinted before. But as the seals of this book are opened by degrees, and the counsels of God are executed in the lower world, doubtless the angels that are ministers of the providence of Christ carry tidings to heaven of all the greater changes that relate to the church; and

Jesus the Son of God, the King of saints and of nations, receives the shouts and honors of the heavenly world, as fast as the joyful tidings arrive thither.

Nor is this spoken by mere conjecture, for the Scripture informs us of the certainty of it. We have frequent accounts in the book of Revelations of new special honors that were paid to *him that sits upon the throne, and to the Lamb*, at certain special periods of time.

When he first took upon him the execution of his Father's decrees, the living creatures *and elders fell down before the Lamb, and they sung a new song, saying, thou art worthy to take the book, and to open the seals thereof*; and ten thousand times ten thousand angels echoed to the song with a loud voice, *worthy is the Lamb that was slain, &c.*; Rev. v. 8, 9, 11. So when the servants of God were sealed in their foreheads, the innumerable multitude of saints shouted *salvation to our God which sitteth upon the throne, and to the Lamb*; Rev. vii. 3, 9, 10. So when the seventh angel sounded, there were great voices in heaven, saying, *the kingdoms of this world are become the kingdoms of our Lord and of his Christ, and he shall reign for ever and ever; and the four-and-twenty elders fell upon their faces, and worshipped and gave thanks*; Rev. xi. 15, 16. Again, when the old dragon and his angels were cast out of heaven, there was a loud voice, saying, *now is come salvation and strength, and the kingdom of our God, and the power of his Christ: for the accuser of our brethren is cast down*; Rev. xii. 9, 10. So upon the fall of Babylon, chap. xiv. and the victory of the saints, chap. xv. and the final destruction of anti-christ, chap. xix. there are new honors done by the saints to God the Father, and his Son Jesus. There are new songs addressed to them at these surprising revolutions on earth, these wondrous turns of judgment on the world, and mercy to the church; all which supposes that the heavenly inhabitants are acquainted with them, and thus their knowledge and their joys increase.

*Objection.* But does not the prophet Isaiah say, in the name of the church of Israel, *Abraham is ignorant of us, and Israel acknowledges us not?* Isaiah lxiii. 16.

*Answer 1.* The words knowledge and acknowledgment often signify a friendly and beneficial care manifested in special acts of kindness and benefits conferred. Therefore the tribe of Levi is said neither to have seen his father or his mother, *nor to acknowledge his brethren, nor to know his own children*; Deut. xxxiii. 9. because the sons of Levi slew every man his brother, and every man his neighbor, to execute the vengeance of the Lord upon

them; *Exod.* xxxii. 26—29. So Abraham and Israel in heaven, in the same sense, know not their posterity on earth, when they approve of the anger of God let out upon them, and afford them no defence. This interpretation perfectly agrees with the context. But it does not follow, that Abraham and Israel were utterly unacquainted with all the greater events of providence towards the Jewish nation, though perhaps they might not know the lesser and more minute circumstances of their afflictions or their deliverances.

*Answer 2.* If we could suppose that the souls of the ancient patriarchs were ignorant of the affairs of their posterity before the coming of the Messiah, yet since Christ in our nature now dwells in the midst of them, and has taken the book of divine counsels into his own hands, since the great God-man rules all things in the upper and lower worlds, it is not probable that Abraham and Israel are so ignorant of the affairs of the church as they were in the days of Isaiah.

And not only the greater and more extensive dispensations that attend the church on earth are made known to *the spirits of the just made perfect*, but even some lesser and particular concerns are very probably revealed to them also.

Is it not said, that when *one sinner on earth repents, there is joy among the angels in heaven?* Luke xv. 7, 10. For every such convert is a new trophy of divine grace. And when the spirits of the just in heaven shall, in successive seasons, behold one and another of their old relatives and acquaintance on earth entering in at the gates, and received into heaven, can we imagine there is no new joy amongst them? Do the pleasures of angels increase when they see a man brought into the state of grace, and shall not the souls of men testify their exultation and delight, when they see one of their fellow-souls, perhaps a dear and intimate friend, translated to the state of glory! Surely every increase of that happy world shall diffuse increasing joy through the holy ones that dwell in it: and those shall have the sweetest taste of this joy that had the dearest concern in it. Oh the transporting and celestial gratulations that pass between two souls of intimate endearment at their first meeting there!

The last argument that I shall use, and it is also the last instance I shall mention, wherein the knowledge and the pleasure of glorified saints must receive addition and improvement is, the great resurrection-day.

The spirits of men are formed on purpose for union with bodies, and if they could attain complete happiness in the highest degree

without them, what need would there be of new-creating their bodies from the dust? Upon this supposition the resurrection itself must seem to be almost in vain. But it is evident, from the word of God, that *the spirits of the just*, with all the perfections that belong to a separate state, wait yet for greater perfection when their bodies shall be restored to them; for as they suffered pain and agony in the body, they shall have a recompence of pleasure too. *All the days of their appointed time they wait, till this blessed change shall come;* Job xiv. 14. *God shall call,* and the dust of the saints *shall answer;* God the Creator will *have a desire again to the work of his own hands,* verse 15; and the happy souls will have a desire to be rejoined to their old companions.

O glorious hour! O blessed meeting-time! A magnificent and divine spectacle, worthy to attract the eyes of all the creation! When the long-divided parts of human nature shall be united with unknown powers and glories! When these bodies shall be called out of their long dark dungeon, all fashioned anew, and all new dressed in immortality and sunbeams! When these spirits shall assume and animate their limbs again, exulting in new life and everlasting vigor!

Now can we suppose it possible that all this vast and amazing change shall be made by the conflagration of the earth and the lower heavens, by the awful and illustrious splendors and solemnities of the last judgment, by the bodies of millions of saints and sinners rising into a painful or joyful immortality, and yet no new ideas hereby communicated to the happy spirits; no increase of their knowledge, or improvement of their joys?

Shall the apostles and the prophets, the confessors and the martyrs, stand at the right hand of Christ, and be owned and acknowledged by him with divine applause in the sight of the whole creation, and yet have no new transports of pleasure running through their souls? Shall they be absolved and approved by the voice of God, with thousands of applauding angels, in the face of heaven, earth, and hell, and all this without any advancement of their knowledge or their blessedness? Shall St. Paul meet the Thessalonian converts *in the presence of his Lord Jesus*, those souls who were once his labor and his hope, and shall they not at that day appear to be *his glory and his joy?* Does not he himself tell them so in his first epistle, chap. ii. verses 19, 20. And can we believe that he or they shall be disappointed? Shall that great apostle see the immense fruits of his labors, the large harvest of souls which he gathered from many provinces of Europe and Asia, all appearing at once in their robes of light and victory,

and shall he feel no new inward exultations of spirit at such a sight? And doubtless many thousand souls, whom he never knew on earth, shall be made known to him at that day, and own their conversion to his sacred writings. And shall all this make no addition to his pleasures? The very mention of so absurd a doctrine refutes and condemns itself.

The saints at that day shall, as it were, be brought into a new world, *and he that sits upon the throne shall make all things new*; and as he crowns his happy followers with new and unknown blessings, so shall he receive the homage of new and unknown praises. This is *a new heaven and a new earth* indeed, beyond all our present apprehensions; and the magnificent language of prophecy shall be fulfilled in its utmost force and brightness.

Doubtless there are pleasures to be enjoyed by complete human nature, by imbodyed souls, which a mere separate spirit is not capable of. Is it not part of the blessedness of human spirits to enjoy mutual society, and hold a pleasing correspondence with each other? But whatsoever be the means and methods of that correspondence in a separate state, surely it wants something of that complete pleasure and sensible intimacy which they shall be made partakers of, when they shall hold noble communion in their bodies raised from the dust, and refined from every weakness. Is it not the happiness of the saints in heaven to see their glorified Saviour? But even this sight is and must be incomplete, till they are endued with bodily organs again. What converse soever the spirits of the just have with the glorified man Jesus while they are absent from the body, yet I am persuaded it is not, nor can it be, so full and perfect in all respects as it shall be at the general resurrection. They cannot now see him face to face in the literal sense, and they wait for this exalted pleasure, this immediate beatific sight. Job himself yet waits, *though the worms have destroyed his body*, till that glorious hour when in his flesh he shall see God, *Job xix. 26*; even God his Redeemer, who *shall stand at the last day on the earth*, verse 25.

Not only all the saints on earth *who have received the first fruits of the Spirit wait for the adoption*, that is, *the redemption of the body*, Rom. viii. 23; but the saints in heaven also live there, waiting till the body be redeemed from the grave, and their adoption shall appear with illustrious evidence: Then they shall all look like the sons of God, like Jesus, the first beloved and the first born. The spirits above, how perfect soever they are in the joys of the separate state, yet wait for those endless scenes of unknown delight that shall succeed the resurrection.

And there is abundant reason for it to be drawn from the word of God; for the Scripture speaks but very little concerning the blessedness of separate souls, in comparison of the frequent and large accounts of the glory and triumph that shall attend the sound of the last trumpet, and the great rising day. It is to this blessed hour that the apostles in their writings are alway directing the hope of the saints. They are ever pointing to this glorious morning, as the season when they shall receive their reward and their prize, their promised joy and their crown; as though all that they had received before in their state of separation were hardly to be named in comparison of that *more exceeding and eternal weight of additional glory*.

What new kinds of sensations shall entertain us in that day, what a rich variety of senses we shall enjoy, what well-appointed and immortal organs we shall be furnished with, instead of our present feeble eyes and ears, and what glorious and transporting objects shall surround us in those unknown worlds, and fill the enlarged powers of the soul with sensible as well as intellectual delights: These are wonders too sublime even for our present conjecture, and are all reserved in the counsels of God, to complete the final felicity of the saints. Thus we have made it appear, that the knowledge and joy that belongs to the spirits of the just made perfect, may admit of large increase.

But can their holiness be increased too? Can perfect holiness receive any improvement?

I will not assert any thing in this matter, lest the manner of expression should offend weaker minds: But I desire leave to enquire, whether those who have the brightest and fullest visions of him are not most transformed into his image, and made most nearly like to him? Now if the separate spirits in heaven are advanced to different degrees of divine knowledge, may they not in this sense have different degrees of holiness too? Is it not possible that one saint should love God more intensely than another, and be more impressed with his likeness as he beholds more of his beauty? Is it not possible that a soul shall grow in the strength and fervor of its love and zeal for God, and be more exactly assimilated to him as it gets nearer to God, and grows up into higher measures of acquaintance with him? Has not the angel Gabriel, the apostle Paul, and the glorified human nature of Christ in any respect more of holiness or love, or likeness to God, than the meanest saint or angel in heaven? Is not their sublimer knowledge and nearness to God attended with proportionable rays of divine sanctity and glory? Is not the divine image in these exalted saints

more complete than in the very lowest? And yet we may boldly assert, that the meanest saint or angel there is so perfect in holiness, as to be free from all sin: There is nothing to be found in any spirit there contrary to the nature or the will of God. So a soul released from the body may perhaps grow in likeness and love to God perpetually, and yet it may have no sinful defects either in its love or conformity to God from the first moment of its entrance into heaven.

I shall first illustrate this by two similitudes, and then propose a rational and clear account of it in a way of argument.

When the distant morning sun shines on a piece of polished metal, the metal reflects the face of the sun in perfection, when the sun first rises on it. But the same instruments coming directly under the meridian sunbeams, shall reflect the same image brighter and warmer: And yet every moment of this reflection, from the morning to the highest noon, shall be perfect, that is, *without spot, without blemish, and without defect.* Such perhaps, is the holiness of all the saints in heaven.

Or shall I rather borrow a similitude from Scripture, and say, the holiness of the spirits in heaven is compared to fine linen? *Rev. xix. 8.* The *fine linen clean and white is the righteousness of the saints, τὰ δικαιώματα τῶν ἀγίων.* Now, though a garment may be perfectly clean without the least spot or stain, yet fine linen may grow whiter hourly, as it is bleached by the constant influence of the heavens. So though every spirit be perfectly cleansed and purified from all sin and defilement, yet it is not impossible that the degrees of its grace and holiness, or conformity to God, may grow brighter, and much improve by nearer approaches to God, longer acquaintance with him, and the continued influences of his majesty and love.

Now let me propose a rational account of this matter to the consideration of those whose minds are raised above common prejudices.

The holiness of an innocent creature consists in attaining the knowledge of the nature and will of God, according to the utmost of its own present capacity, and the means of discovery which it enjoys, and in the various exercises of love to God in an exact proportion to its knowledge; or, to express it briefly, thus, an innocent creature is perfectly holy when it knows and loves God to the utmost reach of its present powers. If this be done, there is no sinful defect, no guilty imperfection; and yet there may be almost an infinite difference in the various degrees of power and capacity, of knowledge and love, amongst innocent spirits: One spirit may be formed capable of knowing much more of his Maker than another,

and may be favored with richer discoveries. Now if every new divine discovery raise an equal proportion of love in the soul, then is it possible that any soul might be perfectly holy at its first entrance into heaven, and yet may make sublime advances in holiness hourly.

Can we suppose that innocent Adam, at his very formation in paradise, knew all the wonders of divine wisdom and goodness that ever he was designed to attain had he lived sinless and immortal? And then can we believe, since his knowledge of his Maker's goodness and wisdom was to receive continual advances, that he should admire him no more, and love him no better, after a thousand years converse with him, than he did at his first creation? Now the case of the saints in heaven is much the same. The rule and measure of their duty is their knowledge, and the rule and measure of their knowledge is their own capacity, and their means of discovery. They never fall short of their duty, and therefore they have no sin: And thus their holiness may be every moment perfect, and yet perhaps every moment increasing, as their capacities are enlarged, and receive new discoveries through all the ages of their immortality.

Happy souls, whose aspiring knowledge, and love, and zeal, move onward hourly, and get still nigher to their God! Surely while they *behold his face* in the unveiled beauties of his holiness, they shall love him with warmer zeal, and *be* more abundantly *satisfied with his likeness*; Psalm xvii. 15.

After all that I have said on the subject, some will insist on this objection, *viz.*, Can there be any such thing as imperfection in heaven? Is it not said to be a perfect state? Now if the spirits above be always growing in excellency and holiness, then they are always defective, and eternally imperfect; which is very hard to suppose concerning the saints in glory, and contrary to the very expression and letter of my text.

The answer to this is very easy to all that will give their reason leave to exercise itself upon just ideas, and to think and argue beyond the chime of words.

Perfection, as I told you before, is not to be taken here in an absolute, but in a comparative sense. Nothing is absolutely perfect but God; and, in comparison of God, the highest and most exalted of all creatures is, and will be, eternally imperfect and defective: *The heavens are not pure in his sight, and he charges his angels with folly*; Job iv. 18. Even the man Christ Jesus shall for ever fall short of the perfection of the divine nature to which he is united, and in this sense will be imperfect for ever. But where any creature has attained to such exalted degrees of excellency as

are far superior to what others have attained, it is the custom of the Scripture to call them perfect, and that with a design to do honor to their character: So Noah *was a just man, and perfect in his generation*; Gen. vi. 9. Job also has this honor done him, he was *perfect and upright*; Job i. 1. And the saints on earth are called perfect in many parts of the word of God, even while they are here on earth, and have many defects and imperfections. So, though it be literally true that the saints in heaven are continually imperfect in comparison of God and Christ, and of what they themselves shall farther attain, yet the Scripture, which delights to do honor to them, chooses rather to call them perfect, because of the sublime degree of excellencies they possess above their fellow-saints on earth: And it is not fit for us to degrade them in our common language by the diminishing and abasing names of defect and imperfection, though their present perfection and excellency admits of everlasting increase.

If any man, after he has read this treatise thus far, and has duly weighed all the former arguments, can see force enough in this last objection to baffle or destroy them all, or can find terror enough in the mere sound of the word imperfect to forbid his assent, I desire he may not be disturbed in the possession of his own sentiments, till the sweet and surprising sensations of ever-growing felicity convince him that heaven is a place of glorious improvement.

This shall suffice for the third general head of my discourse, wherein I have shewn, that the perfection of the spirits of the just is such a perfection as admits of a rich variety of employments and pleasures, according to the various taste and inclination of the blessed; it allows of their different degrees of felicity, according to their different capacities and preparations: It furnishes each blessed spirit with a frequent change of pleasures, and it gives room for perpetual increase.

#### SECTION V.—OF THE MEANS OF ATTAINING THIS PERFECTION.

My *fourth* and last enquiry is this, how do these good spirits of just men arrive at this perfection? I answer, by the death of the body, and their departure from flesh and blood. You will ask, what reasons are there why their departure from the body should bring them into this perfect state? I will content myself to mention these four:

I. Because at death their state of trial is ended, and the time of recompence begins by divine appointment: Now all their imperfections must end with their state of trial.

This is the account of things in the Scripture, *Heb. ix. 27.* *It is appointed for all men once to die, and after death the judgment.* At the hour of death those words are spoken aloud in the most dreadful or most delightful language, *Rev. xxii. 11.* *He that is unjust or filthy, let him be so still: He that is righteous and holy, let him be so still.* And then upon the determination of the state, the reward or recompense follows, verse 12. *My reward is with me, to give to every man according as his work shall be.* Many inconveniences and imperfections, and difficulties, are proper for a state of trial, and by these methods we are trained up for glory. Christ himself was ignorant of many things in the day of his trial; his knowledge on earth was imperfect, and his joys were so too; for he grew in wisdom and knowledge, *he was a man of sorrows, and acquainted with grief.* *Though he were a Son, yet he learned obedience by the things that he suffered, and the Captain of our Salvation was made perfect through sufferings;* *Heb. v. 8, and ii. 10.* But when the time of probation and suffering ceases, then perfection is come, and glory appears.

Hail, blessed spirits above, who have passed your state of trial well! You have run the laborious race under many burdens, and you have received the prize. You have fought with mighty enemies, you have overcome a thousand difficulties, and you enjoy the crown. No more shall you complain of the mixture of error with your knowledge; no more shall you groan under the perplexities of thought, the tumults of passion, the burdens of indwelling iniquity, nor cry out because of oppressing enemies or sorrows. The hour of your trial is finished. You have been sincere and faithful in your imperfect services, and you are arrived at the world of perfection.

II. At the hour of death the spirits of the just leave all the natural and the sinful infirmities of flesh and blood behind them, which are the causes and springs of a thousand imperfections.

The very natural circumstances and necessities of the body, and the inconveniences that attend it in this frail state, do very much embarrass and clog the spirit in its pursuit of knowledge, or holiness, or divine joy.

The flesh is a dark covering to the soul; it beclouds our ideas, confuses our conceptions, and prevents a clear and distinct knowledge of a thousand objects. It is a dull dark tabernacle for a spirit's residence. It has windows indeed to let in light, but those very windows, like painted or curled glass, too often discolor the objects, or distort the shape of them. These very senses of ours frequently impose upon us in the searches after truth, and rep-

resent things not as they are in themselves, and in their own nature, but as they are useful and hurtful to us; and often we pass a false judgment on the nature of things by their influence, and are led into many mistakes in our enquiries after knowledge.

Our fancy or imagination raises up false images of things, and we forsake the solid and real truth to follow the shapes, and colors, and appearances of it painted upon fancy. From our very infancy, our souls are imposed upon by the animal; we draw in early many false judgments, and establish them daily. We are nursed up in prejudice against a hundred truths, both in the philosophical, the moral, and the religious life; and it is the labor of an age even for a wise and good man to wear off a few of them, and to judge with any tolerable freedom, evidence, and certainty.

A great part of our life is spent in sleep, wherein the soul is bound up from exerting any regular thoughts, confined every night to a periodical delirium, subjected to all the fluttering tyranny of the animal spirits, and dragged away into all the wild wanderings of dreaming nature; and indeed the thoughts of many of us always, and of all of us sometimes, even when we are awake, are but little better, because we perpetually dance after the motions of passion and fancy, and our reason seldom judges without them. Alas! how imperfect is the best of us in knowledge here! But knowledge is not the only good of which the body deprives the spirit. The necessities of the body, hunger and thirst, weakness, and weariness, and drowsy spirits, sit very heavy upon the soul, and hinder it in the pursuit of holy and heavenly thoughts, break off many a divine meditation, and interrupt and spoil many a delightful piece of worship. In sickness or in old age, what long and weighty troubles, what tiresome infirmities clog the soul, and what restless pains of nature overwhelm the spirit, and forbid the lively exercises of devotion!

And then also the sinful appetites and perverse affections of nature are very much seated in flesh and blood; so much, that the apostle in many places calls the principles of sin by the general name of flesh. Read the latter end of the seventh chapter of his epistle to the Romans. How doth he complain of the flesh and members of the body, which are fatal instruments of sin and Satan! Read the black catalogue of iniquities, *Gal. v. 19, 20, 21*, and hear them called *the works of the flesh*. Pride and malice, and envy, and lust, and covetousness, and wrath, and revenge, are found secretly working in flesh and blood. Oh! how much are

the springs of these sinful evils seated in the very composition of depraved animal nature! And how is the poor laboring spirit of a saint dreadfully betrayed thereby into frequent actual guilt, even notwithstanding all its care and watchfulness! *O wretched men that we are! who shall deliver us!* Blessed be God, there is a time of release.

And as our knowledge and our holiness are rendered very imperfect, by reason of these sensible and corrupt engines of flesh and blood, so are the joys and satisfactions of the soul perpetually impaired and diminished hereby. The heart of the saint is in pain to feel sin working in it, and the conscience complains under the anguish of guilt. Blessed be God for the balm that is found in the blood of Christ to ease the anguish of conscience! Besides, what spirit can enjoy perfect peace, while it is tied to so many thousand nerves, each of which may become an instrument of intense pain and torture? And the body itself has sharp humors enough in it to corrode those nerves, and fill the indwelling spirit with agonies. What millions of seeds of painful disease lurk in animal nature, that render this body a most uncomfortable dwelling! And how many thousand strokes and accidents are we liable to from abroad, whence new pains and sorrows are derived to the soul! The wind and the weather, the rain and the hail, and the scorching sun, the air, the water, and fire, and every element, may afflict the animal, and pain the unhappy spirit.

But O happy souls, that are free from all the cumbersome and mischievous influences of flesh and blood! from these instruments of iniquity, and springs of deadly guilt and torment! Happy souls, that are released from sick and languishing bodies, from feeble and burdensome limbs, and all the tiresome and painful disorders of dying nature! that are raised beyond the reach and injury of all these lower elements, these mediums of disease and pain! Rejoice and triumph, ye prisoners newly discharged; ye feel the pleasurable truths that we guess at, but ye feel and enjoy them with a relish of sublime pleasure beyond all our conjectures. Rejoice and exult in your new liberty, like a bird released from the imprisoning cage, and sing with sweetest notes to the praise of your Redeemer. O worship and serve him in the full freedom of all your active powers; attend at his feet with intense delight, and love him *with joy unspeakable, and full of glory.*

III. By the death of the body, and their release from it, these *spirits of the just* are free from all the tempting powers and the sinful influences of earth and hell.

This world of sensible allurements, and this world of sinful men,

hath a mighty influence on the spirits of the saints while they dwell in flesh and blood. How often are we deceived into practices of iniquity by the enticing vanities of this life? How often tempted by evil companions, by flattering mischiefs, and ensnaring circumstances? And many times too the fear of men, and the terror of their threatenings, fright us to a neglect of duty, or hurry us into the commission of some active iniquity. Sometimes the pleasing enjoyments of life tie our hearts to the creature by the bands of excessive love; and sometimes the injuries and reproaches we receive from them kindle our fiery passions, and rouse up our sinful wrath and revenge.

This world also is much under the evil influences of the prince of darkness; he is called *the God of this world*: It is greatly given up to the ravages of the roaring lion, and he worries the spirits of the saints while they dwell within his territories, though he is not suffered to destroy and devour them. But at the moment of death the happy spirit is released from the senses, and thereby from the impressions of all sensible things. All the flattering vanities of this lower world have no more power to entice the soul, than the grossest sensualities could entice a pure angel. Sinful companions can no more invite, and threatening tyrants have no more power to terrify.

The spirit is then got out of the territories of Satan; he is *prince of the power of the air*, but his dominion reaches no farther. The heaven where Christ is, never admits him. Michael with his angels hath cast out the old dragon and his angels, and there is no more place found for them there. Happy spirits, delivered and secured from the devil and the world at once, and from all their tempting and destructive influences!

Now when a sanctified soul is thus released both from its union to sinful flesh and blood, and from all possible assaults of the powers of earth and hell, it may be worth our enquiry, whether this release be not sufficient of itself to render the work of sanctification complete, and bring it to a state of perfection, supposing still the ordinary concurrence or influence of the sanctifying spirit? Or whether there must be any immediate, almighty and present change wrought in the soul by a new and extraordinary influence of the blessed Spirit at the very moment of death, by which sanctification is at once completed. Which of these is true I know not. I confess this last has generally been the opinion of our protestant writers; and perhaps it may be the truth: But the Scripture is silent.

Who can tell therefore whether a holy soul, that hath received

the divine seed of grace, which is called the *divine nature*, and is regenerated, and renewed, and sanctified by the Holy Spirit, hath not all its remaining sins and imperfections owing to its bonds of sinful flesh and blood? And whether its compliance with so many temptations, is not to be attributed to its close attachments to corrupt animal nature and sensible things? And therefore whether this sanctified nature would not become completely free from sin, when it is freed from all the influence of a tempting body and a tempting world? Whether the divine bent and bias that is given it by the Spirit of God at first conversion, and by which it maintains continual opposition to sinful flesh, would not make its own way toward perfection without new and extraordinary operations? Whether this would not be sufficient to cause the soul for ever to ascend naturally toward God in desire, and love, and delight, when all clogs and embarrassments are removed? So a vessel filled with upper air, and dragged down by some heavy weight to the bottom of the sea, labors and wrestles with the uneasy burden, and hath a perpetual tendency toward this upper region: But if the weight be once taken off, it immediately of itself rises through the water, and never ceases its motion till it come to the surface.

I confess this is a nicer speculation, and of doubtful evidence; though when St. Paul lays his sinful compliances and captivity so much to the charge of his flesh and members in the vii. chapter to the Romans, and in other places of his writings, one would be ready to think St. Paul was of this opinion. However, this we are sure of, that a sanctified soul released from the body shall be made free from every sin, and its absence from flesh and the world have a large, if not a sufficient influence to effect this freedom. And if we should grant it, that a soul just dismissed from this world is not perfectly sanctified by the mere influence of this release; yet this perfection is sufficiently secured by its dismissal from flesh; for *when absent from the body, it is present with the Lord*: And this leads me to the next particular, *viz.*

IV. At death *the spirits of the just*, released from bodies, enter into another state, a different world, where they have a thousand advantages for improvement in knowledge, and advances in holiness and joy, vastly beyond what any thing in this world could furnish them with.

They see God, and are for ever with him. They behold him face to face, as I have before explained it, in a more immediate and intuitive manner; and doubtless such a sight fills the spirit with a clearer and brighter idea of the nature and attributes of God, than

all the former lessons it had learned in the books of nature and of Scripture could ever give it.

They see our Lord Jesus Christ, our glorified Saviour, in such a way and manner as glorified separate spirits can converse with spirits embodied; and one such view as this will perhaps lead us into more intimate acquaintance with his human nature and his united Godhead, than many years of converse with him by all the mediums of ordinances, those divine glasses wherein *we see him darkly*, as the apostle speaks, and whereby God and Christ represent and manifest themselves to saints on earth.

And as our knowledge shall receive immense and surprising improvements by these new methods of discovery, so I think it shall in due proportion advance our holiness or conformity to God the Father, and his brightest image Christ Jesus: for we cannot behold them in such a manner without a glorious transformation into their likeness, as I have hinted already.

When a soul, that hath a new nature given it by sanctifying grace, is placed in the immediate view and presence of God the most holy, it will ever be growing into a greater degree of nearness and love, and it will be powerfully changed more and more into the likeness of God himself, as a needle when placed within the reach of a loadstone's attractive power, ceases not its motion till it be joined in perfect union, and itself acquires the virtues of that wonderful mineral.

Nor is it possible in heaven that we should advance in knowledge and holiness without an equal improvement in felicity and joy. On earth indeed we are told, *he that will live godly, shall suffer persecution*; and *he that increases knowledge, increases sorrow*; 2 Tim. iii. 12. and Eccles. i. 18. But as *heaven is high above the earth*, so are the customs and the blessings of that state superior to this; for there are no present sorrows to be known, nor any future to be feared: And holiness has no enemy there. All things round the saint shall have a tendency to promote his blessedness.

The spirit of a good man released from the body, and ascending to heaven, is surrounded with thousands and tens of thousands of blessed spirits of the human and angelic order: When it gets within the confines of the heavenly country, it sweetly and insensibly acquires the genius and temper of the inhabitants; it breathes, as it were, a new air, and lives, and thinks, and acts just as they do. It shines and burns with new degrees of knowledge, zeal, and love, and exults in the transporting communications of the same joy. How vastly shall our understandings be improved by the

kind narratives and instructions of the saints that arrived at heaven before us, and by converse with the ministering angels.

You will say, perhaps, that we shall have no need of their teaching when we get to heaven, for we shall be near to God himself, and receive all immediately from him.

But hath the Scripture any where excluded the assistance of our fellow-spirits? God can teach us here on earth immediately by his own Spirit, without the use of books and letters, without the help of prophets and ministers, men of like passions with ourselves; and yet he chooses rather to do it in an instrumental way, and makes his creatures in the lower world the means of our instruction under the superior influence of his own Spirit: And why may he not use the same methods to communicate knowledge to the spirits that newly arrive at that upper world?

There we shall see the patriarchs of the old world, and prophets of the old dispensation, as well as the apostles and evangelists of Christ and his gospel. There we shall be conversant with those blessed angels whom he has used as ministers of his vengeance, or his mercy, to persons and churches, families and nations; and they will not be unwilling to inform us of those great and surprising transactions of God with men.

There we shall find a multitude of other eminent saints before and after Christ.

Adam doubtless will take a peculiar pleasure in acquainting all his happy posterity with the special form and terms of the covenant of innocency; he shall tell us the nature of the trees of knowledge and of life, and how fatally he fell, to the ruin of his unborn offspring. Unhappy father, deriving iniquity and death down to his children! But with what immense satisfaction and everlasting surprise he views the second Adam, his Son and his Saviour, and stands in adoration and transport, while he beholds millions of his seed that he once ruined, now raised to superior glories above the promises of the law of works, by the intervening influence of a Mediator? Enoch, the man that *walked with God*, and Elijah, the great reformer, shall instruct us how they were translated to heaven, and passed into a blessed immortality without calling at the gates of death. Noah will relate to his sons among the blessed, what was the wickedness of the old world before the flood, that provoked God their Maker to drown them all: he shall entertain us with the wonders of the ark, and the covenant of the rainbow in all its glorious colors. Abraham the *father of the faithful*, and the *friend of God*, shall talk over again with us his familiar converse with God and angels in their frequent apparitions to him, and shall tell us

how much the *promised seed* transcends all the poor low ideas he had of him in his obscure age of prophecy. For we cannot suppose that all intimate converse with our father Abraham shall be forbidden us, by any of the laws or manners of that heavenly country, since heaven itself is described by our sitting down as at one table with Abraham, and dwelling in *his bosom*; Matt. viii. 11; and Luke xiv. 15; and xvi. 23.

There Paul and Moses shall join together to give us an account of the Jewish law, and read wondrous and entertaining lectures on the types and figures of that economy, and still lead our thoughts to the glorious antitype with surprising encomiums of the blessed Jesus. Paul shall unfold to us the *dark places* of his own writings, better than he himself once understood them; and Moses shall become an interpreter of his own law, who knew so little of the mystery and beauty of it on earth himself.

There we shall acquaint ourselves with some of the ancient fathers of the Christian church, and the martyrs, those dying champions of the faith and honors of the Christian name. These will recount the various providences of God to the church in their several ages, and shew the visions of St. John in the book of the Revelation, not in the morning twilight of prophecy, but as in the light of noon, as a public history, or as an evening rehearsal of the transactions of the day. The *witnesses* themselves shall tell us how they *prophesied in sackcloth*, and were slain by the man of sin; how they *rose from the dead in three days and a half*, and how the church was at last reformed from the popish mysteries of iniquity and superstition. Cranmer and Ridley, Calvin and Luther, and the rest of the pious reformers, shall make known to us the labors and sufferings of their age, and the wonders of pure Christianity rising as it were out of the grave, and throwing off the chains, the darkness and defilements of Antichrist: And those holy souls who labored in the reformation of Great-Britain, while they relate the transactions of their day, shall perhaps enquire and wonder why their successors put a stop to that blessed work, and have made no further progress in a hundred and fifty years.

Did one of the elders near the throne give notice to the apostle John concerning the martyrs; Rev. vii. 14. *These are they which came out of great tribulations, and have washed their robes, and made them white in the blood of the Lamb;* and shall we not suppose that the happy spirits above tell one another their victories over sin and temptation, and the powers of this world? Shall not the martyrs who triumphed in their own blood, and overcame Satan and Antichrist by the blood of the Lamb, and the word of

*their testimony*, shall they not make it known to the inhabitants of the upper world, and tell it to the honor of Christ their Captain and their King, how they fought, and died, and conquered? Methinks I hear these noble historians rehearsing their sacred tragedy; how they entertain a bright circle of listening angels and fellow-spirits with their own glorious and dreadful story, dreadful to suffer, and glorious to relate!

Shall it be objected here, that all the glorified saints cannot be supposed to maintain immediate discourse with those blessed ancients? Can those ancients be imagined to repeat the same stories perpetually afresh, to entertain every stranger that is newly arrived at heaven?

I answer, that since one single spirit, dwelling in flesh, can communicate his thoughts immediately to five or six thousand hearers at once by his voice, and to millions more successively by books and writings, it is very unreasonable to suppose, that spirits made perfect and glorified have not a power of communicating their thoughts to many more thousands by immediate converse; and it is past our reach to conceive what unknown methods may be in use amongst them, to transmit their ideas and narratives in a much swifter succession, than by books and writings, through all the courts of heaven, and to inform all the new comers, without putting each happy spirit to the everlasting labor of a tiresome repetition. Though every saint in heaven should not be admitted to immediate and speedy converse with these spirits of renown in past ages, yet doubtless these glorious minds have communicated their narratives, and the memoirs of their age, to thousands of that blessed world already, and from them we may receive a repetition of the same wonders with faithfulness and exact truth. History and chronology are no precarious and uncertain sciences in that country.

It is very probable indeed, that we shall have more intimate nearness to, and more familiar communion with those spirits that were of the same age and place with ourselves, and of the same church or family; for we can more delightfully expatiate in our converse with them about the same providences and the same methods of grace, and agreeably entertain and improve each other with notices of the affairs of the upper and lower worlds. Nor must we suppose such sort of historical converse among the blessed spirits is merely designed to fill the mind with new and strange ideas. This pleasure, considered by itself, is not sacred enough for the spirits of the just made perfect. There is not a narrative in the world, but shall disclose some wondrous instances

of divine wisdom or mercy, power or faithfulness, patience and forgiveness, or wrath and justice. The speaker shall feel the workings of all proper reverence, zeal and love, and every hearer shall be impressed with correspondent affections, and join in adoration and holy wonder.

And while we speak of the means and advantages that glorified spirits enjoy for their improvement in all the parts of their felicity, surely we may expect the greatest and the best assistances, even those of the Holy Spirit, to render all these means more effectual. Is he not promised to *abide with us*, to *be in us*, and *dwell with us for ever?* John xiv. 16, 17. Is he not represented as dwelling in *the spirits of the just made perfect*, when it is said, *the Spirit that dwelleth in them shall raise their mortal bodies from the dead?* Rom. viii. 11. May we not then reasonably infer, that that glorious Spirit, who hath been our enlightener, our comforter, and our sanctifier on earth, will be our perpetual enlightener, our eternal sanctifier, and our everlasting comforter? *He that hath so wonderfully begun the divine work in us*, and laid foundations of joy in knowledge and holiness, *will he not finish and perfect his own work*, and add *the top-stone* to crown the heavenly building?

O blessed state of spirits discharged from the prison of flesh and this world! this wicked world, where *Satan* the evil spirit has so wide a range, and so poisonous an influence, and where sinful men swarm on every side, and bear the largest sway! What divine advantages are you possessed of, for the improvement of all your sacred excellencies and joys! When we can raise our thoughts a little, and survey your privileges, we feel somewhat of an inward wish to dwell among you, and send a breathing meditation, or a glance of warm desire towards your world and your society. We poor prisoner-spirits, when we hear such tidings from the country at which you are arrived, we stretch our wings a little, and are ready to wish for the flight. But God our sovereign must appoint the hour; he sees that we are not yet refined enough. Keep our souls, O Father, in this erect posture, looking, reaching, and longing for the celestial world, till thou hast completely prepared us for the promised glory, and then give us the joyful word of dismission.

Thus I have endeavored to make it appear, on what accounts a dismission from the body is both the season when, and the means whereby *the spirits of the just* arrive at this perfection. Their state of trial is ended at death, and therefore all inconveniences and imperfections must cease by divine appointment: By death the soul is released from all the troublesome and tempting influences of

flesh and blood; it is delivered from this sinful world, it is got beyond the reach of Satan the tempter and the tormentor: and it is surrounded with a thousand advantages for improvement in knowledge, holiness, and joy.

#### SECTION VI.—REMARKS ON THE FOREGOING DISCOURSE.

I. ARE the *spirits of the just made perfect* at the death of the body? Then we may be assured that they neither die nor sleep; for sleep and death are both inconsistent with this state of perfection which I have described. The dead saints are not lost nor extinct. They are not perished out of God's world, though they are gone from ours. They are no more in the world that is enlightened by the sun and moon, and the glimmering stars; but they themselves shine gloriously, like stars of different magnitude, in the world where *there is no sun, nor is there any need of the moon to shine in it, for the glory of God enlightens it, and the Lamb is the everlasting light thereof*; Rev. xxi. 23. They are lost from earth, but they are found in heaven. They are dead to us at present, but they are alive to God their Father, and to Jesus their Saviour; they are alive to the holy angels, and all their fellow-saints in that upper world.

If there had been any such thing as a soul sleeping or dying, our Saviour would never have argued thus with the Sadducees, Luke xx. 37, 38, nor have proved the doctrine of the resurrection from the doctrine of the separate state of souls. It is as if he had said, Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob are dead long ago; but God is the God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob still. Now *God is not the God of the dead, but the God of the living*; therefore the souls of those patriarchs are yet alive, *for they all live to God* in the separate state, and they shall appear in their complete human nature, soul and body, at the resurrection. This is the language and the force of our Saviour's argument, and therefore I must believe the soul of Abraham is alive now.

When Jesus promised the penitent thief upon the cross, Luke xxiii. 43. *This day shalt thou be with me in Paradise*, can we persuade ourselves that he intended no more than that the thief should be with him in the grave, or in a state of indolence and sensibility? Does he not assure him in these words, that there is a state of happiness for spirits dismissed from the body, whither the soul of our Lord Jesus was going, and where the dying penitent should find him? So when the infidel Jews stoned Stephen the first martyr, Acts. vii. 59, while he expressed his faith and hope in these words, *Lord Jesus, receive my spirit*, was this spirit of his to

be laid asleep till the resurrection? Can we suppose the dying saint would have made such a request upon so lethargic a principle, and in the view of such a stupid state? No, surely; for he expected, and desired, and prayed to be received to dwell where Christ is, and to behold that glory which he had a glimpse of in the agonies of death.

Would the apostle Paul have been so willing *to be absent from the body*, where he did much service for his Saviour, if he had not a joyful view of being *present with the Lord*? As he expresses it, 2 Cor. v. 8. What doth he mean by this blessed language of presence with the Lord, if his soul was to lie asleep in a senseless and inactive state, till the second coming of Jesus? Or would he have told the *Philippians*, chap. i. verse 23, *that he had a desire to depart, and to be with Christ, which is far better*, if he had hoped for no advantage for his spirit by it, but a mere stupid indolence and rest in the silent grave?

Besides, we are told of rebellious spirits that are *in prison*; 1 Pet. iii. 19, 20, and of *Sodom and Gomorrah, suffering the vengeance of eternal fire*; Jude verse 7. Whether this be material fire, or merely a metaphor to express torment, is not necessary to enquire here: But surely we can never imagine that the justice of God has provided the prison of hell and fiery torments for the souls of the wicked, separate from bodies, and yet that the mercy and goodness of God has provided no heaven of happiness for the spirits of those that have loved, honored, and obeyed him all the days they dwelt in the flesh. There is then, there is certainly a state of happiness prepared for holy souls immediately after death.

When we think of our pious friends departed, our foolish imagination is too ready to indulge and improve our sorrow. We sit solitary in the parlor and the chamber, we miss them there, and we cry, "They are lost." We retire melancholy to the closet, and bewail a lost father, or lost mother, or perhaps a nearer and dearer relative. We miss them in our daily conversation, we miss them in all their friendly offices, and their endearing sensible characters, and we are ready to say again, "Alas! they are lost." This is the language of flesh and blood, of sense and fancy. Come, let our faith teach us to think and speak of them under a more cheerful and a juster representation: They are not utterly lost, for they are present with Christ and with God. They are departed our world, where all things are imperfect, to those upper regions where light and perfection dwell. They have left their offices and stations here among us, but they are employed in a far diviner manner, and

have new stations and nobler offices on nigh. Their places on earth indeed know them no more, but their places in heaven knew them well, even those glorious mansions that were prepared for them from the foundation of the world. Their place is empty in the earthly sanctuary, and in the days of solemn assembly, but they appear above in the heavenly Jerusalem as fair *pillars* and ornaments in the temple of God on high, and shall for ever dwell with him there.

It is a very natural enquiry now, But where are these places of blessed spirits ? What part of the creation is it, in which they have their residence : Is it above or below the sun ? Is their habitation in any of the planetary or starry worlds ? Or are they fled beyond them all ? Where is the proper place of their presence ?

Let me propose a brief answer to these curious questions in a few propositions.

1. The chief properties of spirits are knowledge and activity ; and they are said to be present there, where they have an immediate perception of any thing, and where they lay out their immediate activity or influence. So our souls are said to be present with our bodies, because they have immediate consciousness or knowledge of what relates to the body, and they move it, and act upon it, or influence it, in an immediate manner.

2. God, the infinite Spirit, has an immediate and universal presence ; that is, He is immediately conscious of and acquainted with every thing that passes in all the known and unknown parts of the creation, and by his preserving and governing power manages all things. Wheresoever he displays his glory to separate spirits, that is heaven ; and where he exerts his vengeance, that is hell.

3. Finite spirits have not such an immediate and universal presence. Their knowledge and their activity are confined to certain parts of the creation : And wheresoever they are, if they are under the immediate influences of divine glory, they are in heaven ; if of his vengeance, they are in hell.

4. They are usually represented as having some relation to a particular place or places ; because, while we dwell in flesh and blood, we know not how to conceive of their presence so well in any other way ; and therefore they may be described in Scripture, or in common discourse, as being in heaven, and above the heavens, and in the third heaven, and as coming down to earth, &c., according as they are supposed to put forth any actions there, or to have an immediate cognizance of things that are done in those places ;

for the chief notion we have of the presence of spirits, is their immediate consciousness, and their immediate agency.

5. But if they are provided with any subtle ethereal bodies, which are called vehicles, in and by which they act as soon as they leave flesh and blood, then they may properly be said to reside in those places where their vehicles are, even as our souls at present are said to be in a room, or a closet, or a field, because our bodies are there, in and by which they act.

6. There must be some place where the glorified body of Christ is, and the souls of departed saints are, in some sense, with him. There Enoch and Elijah are in their immortal bodies, and other saints who rose at the resurrection of Christ. They may be, for ought we know, in or among some of the planets, or amongst the stars, though the distance of the stars is so prodigious and amazing, according to the exactest calculations of the new philosophy, that if the motion of a spirit or glorified body were no swifter than that of a cannon-bullet, they would not get so far as the stars in a thousand ages; nor would the journey of so swift a traveller to any of the planets, except the moon, cost less than the labor of several years.

7. These things are so puzzling to our reason, so confound our imagination, and so far transcend the reach of our present faculties to enquire and determine, that it is sufficient for us to know and believe, that *the spirits of the just made perfect* have an existence under the blissful influences of the grace and glory of God. And though we freely speak of them, and the Scripture leads us to conceive of them, as dwelling in a world of light, and in some special place of magnificence and apartments of glory, or as moving from one place to another, yet perhaps it is to be understood chiefly in condescension to the weakness of our present capacities, or in relation to vehicles to which they may be united. But our ignorance in these matters shall be no hinderance to our arrival at heaven, if we tread the paths of faith and holiness, though we know not in what part of the creation it lies. I proceed to the second remark.

II. If all the spirits of the just that depart from this world are made perfect, then there is much better company above than there is below. The society in heaven is much more agreeable than the best society on earth.

Here we meet with a multitude of sinners; they are ready to mingle in all the affairs of life, and sometimes hypocrites join with us in the sacred ordinances of the sanctuary. The apostle himself hath told us, that in the civil concerns of this life we cannot avoid

them ; for if we will keep no company with sinners, we must have nothing to do in this world, *we must needs go out of it* ; 1 Cor. v. 10. But in the world above there are nothing but saints ; no inhabitant there but what is holy. There are no persons there that will tempt or defile us, or lead us astray from the paths of purity or peace. *Holiness to the Lord* is inscribed on every soul there ; nor is there one *Canaanite* in that upper *house of the Lord of hosts* ; Zech. xiv. 21.

But this is not all. For there are many of the saints themselves here on earth, that make but very indifferent companions. Some of them are shamefully ignorant, imprudent, and foolish ; and we have much ado to bear with their folly. Some of them are morose and contentious, captious and peevish, envious and censorious, and ready to take offence on the slightest occasions ; a look or a smile placed wrong shall disoblige them, a mistaken word shall affront them for a month, and it is very hard work to humor and please them : Or we ourselves perhaps are foolish and imprudent, we are peevish and resenting, and our fellow-Christians have as much to do to bear with us or to please us. There are some persons, concerning whom we have reason to hope, that their hearts in the main are right with God, but either by the iniquity of their animal natures, or the power of their temptations, they look so like the men of this world, that it is hard to distinguish them, and their society is dangerous, or at least very unprofitable and undesirable. Some of us fall into gross mistakes, and lead our friends into error, and hand in hand we forsake the truth. Some of us are melancholy, and sit in darkness ; then we spread a gloom and heaviness over all our conversation, and banish all the joys of earth and heaven ; or at best it may be, and in our sprightly days, we fill up the visiting hour with trifles and impertinences, and there is little of heavenly conversation among us. Poor low grovelling subjects furnish our tongues, and entertain our ears, because we are so very imperfect here on earth in knowledge, in holiness, or in divine joy.

But what a glorious difference is there in the society above, where we may be secure from all mistake and falsehood, from all impertinence and folly in the longest discourse or conference ! for every spirit there is so perfect in knowledge as to be free from error, and has so divine a turn of mind, that nothing relishes but what is holy and heavenly. No quarrels, no complaints are found there to embitter our converse, to diminish the pleasure of society, or to draw the heart away from God.

If we would know what the society of heaven is, let us renew the

memory of the wisest and holiest, the kindest and the best companions that we were ever acquainted with here on earth ; let us recollect the most pleasing hours that we ever enjoyed in their society ; let us divest them of all their mistakes and weaknesses, of all their sins and imperfections ; and then by faith and hope let us divest ourselves of all our own guilt and follies too ; let us fancy ourselves engaged with them in delightful discourse on the most divine and most affecting subjects, and our hearts mutually raising each other near to God, and communicating mutual joys. This is the state of the blessed, this the conversation of heaven, this and more than this shall be our entertainment when we arrive at those happy regions.

This thought would very naturally lead me to the mention of our honored and departed friend, but I withhold myself a little, and must detain your expectation till I have made a remark or two more.

III. Are the spirits of the just, who are departed from earth, *made perfect* in heaven ; then they are not the proper subjects for our perpetual sorrows and endless complaints. Let us moderate our grief, therefore, for that very providence that has fixed them in perfect holiness and joy.

We lament their absence, and our loss indeed is great ; but the spirit of Christian friendship should teach us to rejoice in their exaltation. Is it no pleasure to think of them as released from all the bonds of infirm nature, from pains of mortality, and the disquietudes of a sinful world ? Is it not better to lift our eyes upward, and view a parent or a beloved friend adorned with perfect grace and complete in glory, exulting in the fulness of joy near the throne of God, than to behold him laboring under the tiresome disorders of old age, groaning under the anguish and torment of acute distempers, and striving with the troublesome attendants of this sinful and painful state ? Do we profess fondness and affection for those that are gone, and shall we not please ourselves a little in their happiness, or at least abate our mourning ? Doth not St. Paul tell the Corinthians, this is what *we wish, even your perfection ?* 2 Cor. xiii. 9 ; and should not saints in the lower world take some satisfaction when a fellow-saint is arrived at the sum of his own wishes, even perfect holiness and joy on high ?

But I correct myself here ; nature must have its way and be indulged a little ; let it express its sensible pain at the loss of such endearments. A long separation from those who are so near akin to us in flesh and blood, will touch the heart in a painful place, and awaken the tenderest springs of sorrow. The sluices must be al-

lowed to be held open a little; nature seems to demand it as a debt to love, and grace does not utterly forbid it. When Lazarus died, Jesus *groaned and wept*; John xi. 33, 35. Yet let not sorrow triumph and reign, and like a flood break over all its bounds; rather give the stream of it a little diversion into a better channel. Come, let us take the advice which our blessed Saviour gives to the daughters of Jerusalem, who attended him to his cross with tears, Luke xxiii. 28. *Weep not for me, but if you must weep, do it for yourselves and your children;* because you are still left in the valley of sin and sorrow, while the saints departed are arrived at the land of peace, and their feet stand upon the mountains of paradise.

Could the voice of those blessed spirits made perfect reach our ears, we should hear them speak in the language of their Lord, “Weep not for us, but for yourselves; you are still encompassed with temptations and difficulties, we have surmounted them all: You are wrestling with many errors, and entangled in dark and noisy controversies; we are perfect in knowledge, and see divine mysteries in a divine light: You are laboring in the race; we are crowned, and have received the prize: You are striving in the field of battle, and we well remember the toilsome and painful conflict; we pity you, and call you rather to weep for yourselves than for us; we have finished all the war through divine grace, and are secure in the city of triumph: You are yet travelling through the valley of tears; we are refreshing ourselves in the gardens of pleasure, and on hills of everlasting gladness. Hold on with courage, and faith, and patience; there are mansions of joy prepared for you also, and we wait your happy arrival.”

IV. Are the spirits of just men in heaven made perfect in the same excellencies and privileges which they possessed on earth? Then if our curiosity or our love has a mind to know what are the circumstances of our pious friends departed, or how they are employed above, let us review what they were here below, and how they employed themselves when they were with us; for, as I told you, in this life we are trained up for the life of glory: We shall then be advanced to a glorious and transcendent degree of the same graces; and there will be something in the future state of rewards answerable and correspondent to the present state of labor and trial.

This thought necessarily calls our meditations backward a little, to take a short survey of some peculiar characters of our excellent friend departed, that we may learn to rejoice in the present perfection of his graces and glories.

## SECTION VII.—THE CHARACTER OF THE DECEASED.

WHEN I name Sir John Hartopp, all that knew him will agree that I name a gentleman, a scholar, and a Christian ; and neither of these characters, in the best and most valuable sense of them, could forsake him at his entrance into heaven.

He shone with eminence among persons of birth and title\* on earth ; while his obliging deportment and affable temper rendered him easy of access to all his inferiors, and made him the delight of all his friends. Though he knew what was due to his quality in this world, yet he affected none of the grandeurs of life, but daily practised condescension and love, and secured the respect of all, without assuming a superior air. Then surely he carried this temper with him to the upper world, where gentleness and goodness reign in the highest perfection ; and doubtless he practises now all the same graces of conversation among the blessed spirits there, but in a far superior manner, according to the unknown laws and customs of that region of light and love.

He had a taste for universal learning, and ingenious arts were his delight from his youth. He pursued knowledge in various forms, and was acquainted with many parts of human science. Mathematical speculations and practices were a favorite study with him in his younger years ; and even to his old age he maintained his acquaintance with the motions of the heavenly bodies, and light and shade whereby time is measured. And may we not suppose that there are entertainments amongst the works of God on high to feast the spirits of such a genius ? May they not in that upper region look down and survey the various contrivances of divine wisdom, which created all things in these lower worlds in number, weight, and measure ? May not our exalted friend give glory there to his Maker, in the contemplation of the same heavenly bodies, though he dwells in the region where night and shadows are never known, and above the need or use of sun-beams.

But the book of God was his chief study and his divinest delight. His Bible lay before him night and day, and he was well acquainted with the writers that explained it best. He was desirous of seeing what the Spirit of God said to men in the original languages. For this end he commenced some acquaintance with Hebrew when he was more than fifty years old : And that he might

\* His grandfather, Sir Edward Hartopp, was created a baronet by King James I. 1619, which was but a few years after the first institution of that order.

be capable of judging of the true sense of any text in the New Testament, he kept his youthful knowledge of the Greek language in some measure even to the period of his life.

But earthly languages are of little use in heaven. There are too many defects and ambiguities in them to express the bright, the complete, and the distinct ideas of separate spirits. We may allow our learned friend, therefore, to be divested of these when he dropped mortality. Now he is out of the body, and *caught up to dwell* in paradise, where Saint Paul made heretofore a short visit, 2 Cor. xii. 2, 4, he hears and he speaks those *unspeakable words* it is not possible for a mortal tongue to utter. The things of heaven are not to be expressed in any foreign language.

Among the various themes of Christian contemplation, he took peculiar pleasure in the doctrines of grace, in the display of the glories of the person of Christ, God in our nature, and the wondrous work of redemption by his cross. He adored him as his Lord and his God: And while he trusted in his righteousness as the great Mediator, and beheld him as his crucified Saviour, he was ever zealous to maintain the honors due to his divine nature and Majesty. And we may be sure this is a study in which he is still engaged, and he spends the days of his eternity in the pleasurable contemplations of his glorified Redeemer, and the sacred mysteries of his cross, and his throne, *which things the angels desire to pry into.*

His practice in life was agreeable to his Christian principles, for he knew that *the grace of God, that brings salvation to men, teaches them to deny all ungodliness, and to live sober, righteous and religious lives, that in all things they may adorn the doctrine of God their Saviour.* Now that this part of his character is continued and exalted in the region of the blessed spirits, is too evident to need any amplification or proof; for holiness in every part of it is made perfect there, and all under the sweet constraint of love. His conversation was pious and learned, ingenious and instructive: He was inquisitive into the affairs of the learned world, the progress of arts and sciences, the concerns of the nation, and the interest of the church of Christ: And upon all occasions was as ready to communicate as he was to enquire. What he knew of the things of God or man, he resolved not to know them only for himself, but for the benefit of all that had the honor of his acquaintance. There are many of his friends that will join with me to confess, how often we have departed from his company refreshed and advanced in some useful knowledge. And I cannot but reckon it among the blessings of heaven, when I review those five years of

pleasure and improvement, which I spent in his family in my younger part of life; and I found much instruction myself, where I was called to be an instructor.

Nor can I think such enquiries and such communications as are suitable to the affairs of the upper world, are unpractised among the spirits of the just men made perfect there; for man is a sociable creature, and enjoys communion with his fellow-saints there, as well as with his Maker and his Saviour. Nor can the spirit of our honored and departed friend be a stranger to the pleasures of society amongst his fellow-spirits in those blessed mansions.

His zeal for the welfare of his country, and of the church of Christ in it, carried him out to the most expensive and toilsome services in his younger and his middle age. He employed his time, his spirits, his interest and his riches, for the defence of this poor nation, when forty years ago it was in the utmost danger of popery and ruin.\* And doubtless the spirits of the just in heaven are not utterly unacquainted with the affairs of the kingdom of Christ on earth. He rejoices and will rejoice among his fellow-saints, when happy tidings of the militant church, or of the religious interests of Great Britain, are brought to the upper world by ministering angels. He waits there for the full accomplishment of all the promises of Christ to his church, when it shall be freed from sins and sorrows, from persecutions and all mixtures of superstition, and shall be presented to the Father, *a glorious church without spot or wrinkle*, in perfect beauty and joy.

His doors were ever open, and his carriage always friendly and courteous to the ministers of the gospel, though they were distinguished among themselves by names of different parties: for he loved all that loved our Lord Jesus Christ *in sincerity*. He chose indeed to bear a part in constant public worship with the Protestant Dissenters, for he thought their practice more agreeable to the rules of the gospel: He joined himself in communion with one of their churches, which was under the pastoral care of the reverend Dr. John Owen, where he continued an honorable member under successive pastors till the day of his death. Nor was he ashamed to own and support that despised interest, nor to frequent those assemblies, when the spirit of persecution raged highest in the days of king Charles and king James the Second. He was a

\* He was three times chosen representative in parliament for his county of Leicestershire, in those years when a sacred zeal for liberty and religion strove hard to bring in the bill of exclusion, to prevent the Duke of York, afterwards King James II. from inheriting the crown of England.

present refuge for the oppressed, and the special providence of God secured him and his friends from *the fury of the oppressor*. He was always a devout and diligent attendant on public ordinances till these last years of his life, when the infirmities of age growing upon him, confined him to his private retirements.

But if age confined him, death gave him a release. He is exalted now to the church in heaven, and has taken his place in that glorious assembly, where he worships among them before the throne : There he has no need to relieve his memory by the swiftness of his pen, which was his perpetual practice in the church on earth, and by which means he often entertained his family in the evening worship on the Lord's-day with excellent discourses ; some of which he copied from the lips of some of the greatest preachers of the last age : There his unbodied spirit is able to sustain the sublimest raptures of devotion, which run through the worshippers in that heavenly state ; though here on earth I have sometimes seen the pious pleasure too strong for him : And while he has been reading the things of God to his household, the devotion of his heart has broken through his eyes, has interrupted his voice, and commanded a sacred pause and silence.

He enjoyed an intimate friendship with that great and venerable man Dr. Owen, and this was mutually cultivated with zeal and delight on both sides, till death divided them. The world has already been acquainted, that it is to the pious industry of Sir John Hartopp, that we are indebted for many of those sermons and discourses of the Doctor's, which have lately been published in folio. A long and familiar acquaintance enabled him also to furnish many memoirs or matters of fact, toward that brief account of the Doctor's life, which is prefixed to that volume, though it was drawn up in the present form, with various enlargements, by another hand. Now can we suppose two such souls to have been so happily intimate on earth, and may we not imagine they found each other among the brighter spirits on high ! May we not indulge ourselves to believe, that our late honored friend hath been congratulated upon his arrival by that holy man that assisted to direct and lead him thither ? Nor is it improbable that he has found other happy souls there, who were numbered among his pious acquaintance on earth. Shall I mention that excellent man, Sir Thomas Abney, who was his late forerunner to heaven, and had not finished two months there before Sir John Hartopp's arrival ! Happy spirits ! May I congratulate your meeting in the celestial regions ? But the world and the churches mourn your absence ; and the Protestant Dissenters lament the loss of two of their fairest ornaments and honors.

And is there not the same reason to believe, that our departed friend hath by this time renewed his sacred endearments with those kindred spirits, that were once related to him in some of the nearest bonds of flesh and blood? There they rejoice together in unknown satisfaction, they wait and long for the arrival of those whom they left behind, and for whose immortal welfare they had a solicitous concern in the state of their mortality.

This thought opens my way to address the posterity, the kindred, and the friends of the deceased, in the fifth remark.

#### SECTION VIII.—AN ADDRESS TO THE FRIENDS AND RELATIVES OF THE DECEASED.

V. If the perfection of blessed spirits above consists in a glorious increase of those virtues and graces which were begun below, let us see to it then, that those graces and those virtues are begun in us here, or they will never be perfected in us hereafter. If our spirits have nothing of that divine righteousness wrought in them on earth, we can never be admitted into the company of the spirits of the righteous made perfect in heaven. It is an old saying among divines, but it is a most rational and a certain truth, that grace is glory begun, and glory is but grace perfected. The saints above have the same divine nature, the same sanctified inclinations, and are engaged in many of the same sacred employments with the saints below, but all in a superior degree, and in a more transcendent manner.

As for you, my friends, who have the happiness and honor to be descended from such parents, or to be nearly related to such saints, you have seen the virtues and graces, the exemplary character and piety of them who are gone before; you have had many bright and shining examples in your family; you are *the children of the blessed of the Lord*, and may you for ever be blessed with them! And in order to it, see that you are made like them now, that ye may be *followers of them, who through faith and patience inherit the promises*. This is a proper season to examine yourselves, and call your souls to account in such language as this: My father, my mother, my honored and superior kindred are gone to glory: Their graces are perfected, and are not mine begun? What, have I no evidences for heaven yet ready? no exercises of faith, of love, of repentance, of true holiness? Are they arrived at heaven, and am I not yet travelling in the same road?

They were convinced of sin, and the danger of eternal death, so as to give themselves no rest till they found salvation. Have I ever been convinced of the sin of my nature, and the guilt of my life?

Have I beheld myself exposed to the anger of God, and in danger of everlasting misery, so as to cry out with myself, *What shall I do to be saved?*

They have seen Jesus the Son of God, the all-sufficient Saviour, and have committed their souls by humble faith into his hands, to obtain pardon for the sake of his atonement, to be justified through his righteousness, to be renewed and made holy by the grace of his Spirit, and to be preserved to eternal glory. Now what have I seen of the excellency, or all-sufficiency, or necessity of Christ as a Mediator? Have I been persuaded to trust in him for my acceptance with God, to give my soul up to him as my guide, guard, and ruler, to be formed after his image, and to venture all my immortal concerns with him, to be brought safe to heaven? Have I ever received him as my Lord and my Saviour, under those condescending characters and offices which he sustains for a sinner's salvation? They have believed in him while he was unseen, and they loved him, *though they saw him not; they rejoiced in him as their all*, and they knew not how to live without him. How is it with my soul in this respect? Do I love Jesus the Lord? Is he the desire of my heart, and the delight of my life?

Though they were kept by the grace of God from the pollutions of the world, and upheld their unblemished character to the last, yet they found sin to be their most dangerous enemy; they have felt it bitter and painful to their souls, and they long groaned under it as their daily burden. What is my grief? what my chief sorrow? *Do I groan in this tabernacle being burdened*, because of this inward enemy? And do I long to be rid of it? Are my sinful affections like a pain at my heart, and do the workings of sin within me awaken my continual repentance? They maintained a sacred tenderness of conscience, and were afraid to indulge themselves in that company, in that practice, and in those liberties of life which have often proved a dangerous snare to souls. Now can I appeal to God, who sees my heart, that I am cautious and watchful against every snare, that I stand afar off from every temptation, and *abstain from all appearance of evil?*

They took sweet pleasure in retirement, in prayer, and other holy exercises: This was the refreshment of their hearts, and the throne of grace was their refuge under every distress and difficulty. Let me ask my heart, what is my pleasure, my inward delight? Do I find a sweet relish in devotion? And when outward troubles perplex me, do I make the mercy-seat my speedy and constant refuge? They lived upon their Bible, they counted the gospel their treasure, and the promises and the words of God written there, were more valuable

to them than all their outward riches. But what is my life? What is my treasure? What is my hope? Do I count heaven and the gospel my chief inheritance? Do I converse much with my Bible, and find food and support there! Do I *look at things unseen and eternal*, and feed and rest upon the promised glories of another world, when I meet with disappointments here?

They had a large share of Christian experience, a rich stock of divine and spiritual observations, by much converse with God and with their own souls. What have I got of this kind for the support of my soul? or are all these strange things to me? Believe me, my dear and honored friends, these are matters of infinite importance; I am sure you will think so one day: And I trust and persuade myself, you think them so now. I cannot give myself leave to imagine that you put these thoughts far from you. Some of you have made it appear that they lie next your heart, and that your souls are deeply engaged in the ways of God and goodness. Oh that every one of you would give the same comfort and joy to your friends! Be not satisfied with a mere negative holiness, and unspotted character in the eyes of the world; but let the world know that you dare be religious, and profess universal piety in a degenerate age. Let those that honor the memory of your parents, and love your souls, rejoice in your public Christianity. Let them know, that there are the foundations of heavenly glory laid within you all, and the blessed work begun on earth, that shall surely be made perfect among *the spirits of the just* in heaven.

And methinks I would not have you contented with the lowest seat there; but stir up yourselves to a most unwearied pursuit of holiness in the sublimer degrees of it. And thus laboring in the Christian race, contend for some of the brighter prizes, some of the richer crowns of glory. Be not satisfied to sit at a great distance below your parents departed, even in the heavenly country: But strive with a holy ambition that you may come near them, that the whole family together may arrive at some superior degrees of blessedness. And oh may divine grace grant me the pleasure to be a witness to your exalted stations, and to worship and rejoice amongst you there! *Amen.*

DISCOURSES  
OF  
THE LOVE OF GOD,  
AND ITS  
INFLUENCE ON ALL THE PASSIONS:  
WITH A DISCOVERY OF THE RIGHT USE AND ABUSE OF  
THEM IN MATTERS OF RELIGION.

A DEVOUT MEDITATION  
IS ANNEXED TO EACH DISCOURSE.



## P R E F A C E.

In the first edition of these discourses, “the Doctrine of the Passions” stood as an introduction to them, wherein their general nature was explained, their various kinds reduced to some regular order, the uses of them in human life represented, and moral and divine rules were proposed for the government of these natural and active powers. This little treatise has been much enlarged, and printed by itself, under a distinct title, *viz.*, “The Doctrine of the Passions explained and improved.” These “Discourses of the Love of God, and the Use and Abuse of the Passions in Religion” now follow; and since there are readers of a different taste, who have desired each of them alone, they may now choose for themselves, or they may order the bookseller to join them together, if they please.

Many years are now passed since the general design of both these treatises was formed, and some brief sketches of them were drawn, which had lain by me in long silence among other papers. That which inclined me at last to draw up these discourses of the “Use of the Passions in Religion” into a more regular form, was the growing deadness and degeneracy of our age in vital religion, though it grew bright in rational and polite learning. There are too many persons who have imbibed, and propagate this notion, that it is almost the only business of a preacher to teach the necessary doctrines and duties of our holy religion, by a mere explication of the word of God, without enforcing these things on the conscience by a pathetic address to the heart; and that the business of a Christian in his attendance on sermons, is to learn what these doctrines and duties are, without taking any pains to awaken the devout sensations of hope and fear, and love and joy, though the God of nature hath ordained them to be the most effectual allurements or spurs to duty in this present animal state. We are often told, that this warm and affectionate religion belongs only to the weaker parts of mankind, and is not strong and manly enough for persons of sense and good reasoning. But where the religious use of the passions is renounced and abandoned, we do not find this cold and dry reasoning sufficient to raise virtue and piety to any great and honorable degree, even in their men of sense, without the assistance of pious affections.

On the other hand, it must be acknowledged also, there have been many

persons who have made their religion to consist too much in the working of their passions, without a due exercise of reason in the things of God. They have contented themselves with some devout raptures without seeking after clear conceptions of divine things, or building their faith and hope, and practice, upon a just and solid foundation of sacred knowledge. Whatsoever is vehement, if it hath but the name of God annexed to it, they are ready to think and call sacred and divine. This sort of religion lies very much exposed to all the wild temptations of fancy and enthusiasm: A great deal of the bigotry of the world, and the madness of persecution may be ascribed to this unhappy spring. I thought it necessary, therefore, to speak of the abuse of the passions, as well as the use of them, and to guard against mistakes on both sides.

As a foundation for these discourses, I chose to treat of the love of God, which in a sovereign manner rules and manages, awakens or suppresses all the other passions of the soul. The whole train of affections, both the painful and the pleasant ones, are under the power and regulation of love. In my pursuit of this subject, I have endeavored to avoid all extremes; that is, neither to turn religion into a matter of speculation or cold reasoning, nor to give up the devout Christian to all wandering fooleries of warm and ungoverned passion. I hope I have maintained the middle way, which, as it is most agreeable to the holy Scripture, and to the genius of Christianity, so it has produced the noblest fruits of righteousness in every age. On this account I may presume, that the track which I have pursued will give no just offence to the wisest and the best of Christians.

In order to make this work more serviceable to the purposes of practical godliness, I have endeavored to form a pathetic meditation upon the argument of each discourse, that I might, as far as possible, exemplify the practice of those things which I recommend to the world, and assist the devout reader to make a present use of them toward his advancement in the Christian life.

## DISCOURSE I.

### THE AFFECTIONATE AND SUPREME LOVE OF GOD.

"Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart."—MARK xii. 30.

AMONG all the teachers of religion that have been sent from God to men, the most eminent and illustrious are Moses and Christ; Moses, the servant of the living God, and Christ, *his only-begotten Son*. Both of them lay the foundation of all true religion in the unity of God, and both of them make our religion to consist in love. Thus saith Moses in the sixth of Deuteronomy, whence my text is cited, and thus saith the blessed Jesus in the place where my text lies, *Hear, O Israel, the Lord our God is one Lord. Thou shalt love him with all thy heart.*

It is no wonder that all the powers of our natures, with all the utmost extent of our capacities, must be devoted to the love and service of this God, since there is but one, since he is God alone, and *there is none besides him*. Isaiah xliv. 6. He must reign over the heart and the soul, over all our intellectual and our bodily powers, supreme, and without a rival. Though the love of our neighbor is required both by Moses and Christ, as a necessary part of our religion, yet it must never stand in competition with the love of our God.

Some suppose the supreme and intense degree of this love, to be the whole design of Christ, in recommending the love of God to us in all these four expressions, *Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, with all thy mind, and with all thy strength, viz.*, to intimate in general that all the faculties of nature should be employed in the love and service of God, with the greatest intensioness and full vigor of exercise.

But if we should distinguish these sentences, according to the different powers of nature, into so many different significations, I think they may be most naturally thus explained: God must be loved with *all the mind*, that is, he must stand highest in the esteem of the judgment: he must be loved with *all the soul*, that is, with the strongest attachment of the will to him: he must be loved with *all the heart*, that is, with the warmest and sincerest affection: and he must be loved with *all the strength*, that is, this love must

be manifested by the utmost exercise and activity of all the inferior powers.

The heart, in the language of Scripture, and in the common sense of men, is the seat of the passions, that is, of fear, hope, love, hatred, joy, sorrow, shame, desire, and such like, which are usually called the passions or affections of the heart. I shall not stand in this place to give a more exact or philosophical account of them, having done that in another treatise.\* If it be enquired why the heart is said to be the seat of the passions, there is this good reason for it, *viz.*, It is by sensible effects on the heart, that several of the affections do chiefly exert and manifest themselves; and it was chiefly for this reason that Jewish philosophy gave the soul of man its chief residence in the heart, and made it to be the seat of the passions.

The heart also in Scripture, and in almost all nations and languages, is used to express or imply sincerity; what is done from the heart is done sincerely, perhaps, because the passions are naturally sincere, and are not so easy to be disguised as the outward actions of men.

Now since it is my design to treat of the exercises of the passions, or affections of the heart in the affairs of religion, I have chosen this sentence as the foundation of my discourses. The plain and obvious proposition contained in the words is this, *viz.*:

"The Lord our God is the proper object of our most sincere affection, and our supreme love." It is not enough for the eye to be lifted up to him, or the knee to bow before him; it is not enough for the tongue to speak of him, or the hand to act for his interest in the world; all this may be done by painted hypocrites, whose religion is all disguise and vanity: but the heart, with all the inward powers and passions, must be devoted to him in the first place: this is religion indeed. The great God values not the service of men, if the heart be not in it: The Lord sees and judges the heart; he has no regard to outward forms of worship, if there be no inward adoration, if no devout affection be employed therein. It is therefore a matter of infinite importance, to have the whole heart engaged steadfastly for God. If this be done we shall have a sufficient evidence in ourselves, that we are truly religious, and are beloved of God. In treating this subject, I shall consider these seven things:

I. What is presupposed and implied in the affectionate and supreme love of God.

II. What will be the effects of this supreme love to God on all

\* The Doctrine of the Passions.

the other passions, or how this divine passion will engage all the rest of the affectionate powers in the interests of religion.

III. Of what use and importance the passions are in religion, and what advantage is to be derived from them.

IV. How far the passions may be abused, even in religious concerns, or what is the irregular use of them, and how their efforts should be limited and restrained.—Under each of these heads I shall propose some useful reflections.

V. We shall show how the affectionate Christian may be vindicated, against the cavils and reproaches of men, in his warmest exercises of devotion.

VI. What relief or comfort may be given to humble and sincere Christians, who complain that they feel but very low degrees of this affectionate love to God, or of the exercise of pious passions, either in public worship, or in their devout retirements.

VII. What are the most proper and effectual methods of exciting and engaging the affections in religion. Of each of these in their order.

First, “What is presupposed and implied in the supreme and affectionate love of God?” I answer, these five things.\*

I. Some good degrees of the knowledge of God, and such an acquaintance with him, as may raise the highest esteem of him in our mind. It is impossible that we should love any thing that we know not: and it is not to be expected that we should love God supremely or *with all our heart*, if we have not known him to be more excellent, and more desirable than all other things we are acquainted with. We must have the highest opinion of his transcendent worth, or we cannot love him above all things.

It is granted, we may love or delight in some objects of an inferior nature, as they are instruments of our health or ease, or comfort; so we are said to love our habitation and our food, because they minister to our convenience or support in the present life. We may love some poor worthless wretches with good-will and compassion, because we design to bestow some benefits upon them. We love our country and our kindred with a sort of natural attachment of the heart, because they belong to ourselves, and we are, as it were, of a piece with them. We love our friends because we esteem

\* I might have described the affectionate love of God here by the love of esteem, the love of benevolence, and the love of complacency, according to the distributions of love in the “Treatise of the Passions,” mentioned in the preface; but I choose rather in this place to show what acts or operations of the understanding and will are presupposed and included in the love of God: the more affectionate operations of it are reserved to the next discourse

them possessed of some valuable properties, and able to confer benefits on us, or to relieve our wants: But unless we see the great and blessed God, as a being possessed of the highest excellencies, and capable of bestowing on us the richest benefits; unless we see him as an all-sufficient good, we shall never love him with our whole heart: The affection to so unseen and spiritual a being as God is, can never rise high where the esteem is but low: Where the love ought to be superior to all other loves, the esteem must be transcendent.

II. The affectionate and supreme love of God presupposes some hope of an interest to be obtained in his favor, and the highest advantages to be derived from him. If I lie down in despair of his mercy, I cannot look on God, even in all his supreme excellencies, with an eye of love. The devil, the worst of creatures, knows more of the transcendent glory and worth of the great God, than the wisest and the best of mortals here on earth: But he knows there is no hope for him to obtain an interest in his favor, and therefore he continues in his old enmity. His rebellion has cut him off from all expectation of divine mercy, and therefore he cannot love this God of infinite excellency. A dreadful state indeed for an intelligent being, that he cannot love what he knows to be infinitely amiable!

Hope is the most alluring spring of love. Terror and slavish fear stand opposite to this holy affection: Such fear *has torment* in it, and so far as we fear God as an enemy, *we are not made perfect in his love*; 1 John iv. 18. We love him, because we hope that he has, or he will love us: It is the assurance, or at least the expectation of some interest in God, that engages the most affectionate love: And, perhaps, the words of my text may have some reference hereto, when it is said, *thou shalt love the Lord thy God*. When we believe or hope that the Lord is our God, we cannot but love him.

III. This love of the heart implies a strong inclination of the will toward God, a steady bent of soul toward this blessed Author of our being and happiness: It implies a choice of him above and beyond all things else, as our most desirable portion and our eternal good. If any thing in this world be the chosen portion of our souls, if any thing beneath and besides God be made our chief hope, our support, and our life, our hearts will run out in strongest affections toward it, for it is our chief happiness; and then we can never love God as it becomes a creature to love his Creator.

The holy Psalmist was a most affectionate lover of his God, and how often does he call him the *portion of his inheritance, his refuge,*

*and his hope?* Psalm xvi. 5. cxlii. 5, and in Psalm lxxiii. 26. *Thou art the strength of my heart, and my portion for ever.* Blessed saint! He had chosen God for his eternal all.

Under this head I should add also, that where the will is thus attached to God, the soul will exert itself in continual wishes for the honor of God in the world: It is the nature of love to wish well, and to do good to the beloved object; and since God can receive no other good from us, but the manifestation of his excellencies and honors among men, we shall earnestly seek and wish this glory of God, if we are sincere lovers of him.

IV. This affectionate and supreme love of God includes in it an outgoing of the heart after him, with most intense longings, and most pleasing sensations: This is what we are wont to call more eminently the love of desire, and the love of delight, which I shall speak of more at large in the following discourse. The heart of a sincere good man is restless till it find God, that is, till it obtain a solid hope and persuasion of his love, a growing conformity to him, and constant delight in him. The heart is not easy without God: It acquiesces and rests in him alone. If I have God for my friend, and my everlasting portion, I have all: If he be absent, *O that I knew where I might find him!* Job xxiii. 3. And if he manifest his presence with his divine influences, "Come back, O my soul, from amongst the creatures; come back, and return to God thy rest;" *Psalm cxvi. 7.*

V. Where the love of God reigns in the affections it will command all the other powers of nature, and all the rest of the passions, to act suitably to this sovereign and ruling affection of love: The eye will often look up to God in a way of faith and humble dependence: The ear will be attentive to his holy word: The hand will be lifted up to heaven in daily requests: The knees will be bended in humble worship: all the outward powers will be busy in doing the will of God, and promoting his glory: *He that loves God, will keep his commandments*, and fulfil every present duty with delight: He will endeavor to please God in all his actions, and watch against and avoid whatsoever may offend him. And while the several outward powers are thus engaged, all the inward affections of nature will be employed in correspondent exercises. Supreme love will govern all the active train of human passions, and lead them captive to cheerful obedience.

This brings me to the next thing I proposed: But before I enter upon it I would make these four reflections, which will conclude the present discourse.

Reflection I. How vain are all their pretences to love God who

know little or nothing of him, who are neither acquainted with the glorious perfections of his nature, nor with the wondrous discoveries of his grace! Love must be founded in knowledge. How vain are their pretences to love God with all their heart, and in a supreme degree, who never saw him to be a being of transcendent worth, of surpassing excellency, and capable of making them for ever happy; who value their *corn*, and their *wine*, and their *oil*, their business, their riches, or their diversions more than God and his love! How senseless and absurd is the pretence to love God above all things, if we do not resolve to live upon him as our hope and happiness; if we do not choose him to be our God and our All, our chief and all-sufficient portion in this world, and that to come! Where the idea of God as a being of supreme excellence doth not reign in the mind, where the will is not determined and fixed on God, as our supreme good, men are strangers to this sacred and divine affection of love. Till this be done, we cannot be said to love God with all the heart.

Reflection II. How necessary and useful a practice it is for a Christian to meditate often on the transcendent perfection and worth of the blessed God, to survey his attributes, and his grace in Christ Jesus, to keep up in the mind a constant idea of his supreme excellence, and frequently to repeat and confirm the choice of him, as our highest hope, our portion, and our everlasting good! This will keep the love of God warm at the heart, and maintain the divine affection in its primitive life and vigor. But if our idea of the adorable and supreme excellence of God grow faint and feeble, and sink lower in the mind; if we lose the sight of his amiable glories, the sense of his amazing love in the gospel, his rich promises and his alluring grace, if our will cleave not to him as our chief good, and live not on him daily as our spring of happiness, we shall abate the fervency of this sacred passion, our love to God will grow cold by degrees, and suffer great and guilty decays.

Reflection III. How greatly and eternally are we indebted to Jesus the Son of God, who has revealed the Father to us in all his most amiable characters and glories, and brought him, as it were, within the reach of our love! The three great springs of love to God are these: a clear discovery of what God is in himself; a lively sense of what he has done for us; and a well-grounded hope of what he will bestow upon us. All these are owing chiefly to our blessed Jesus. Let us consider them distinctly:

1. It is he, even the beloved Son of God, who lay in the bosom of the Father, who has made a fuller and brighter discovery to us what God is, what an admirable and transcendent Being, a Spirit

glorious in all perfections. It is true, the light of nature dictates some of these things to us, and the ancient prophets have given further manifestations. *But none knows the Father so as the Son does, and those to whom the Son will reveal him.* Matt. xi. 27. That blessed person, who is *one with the Father*, must know him best. That illustrious man, who is so intimately united to God, and *in whom dwells all the fulness of the Godhead bodily.* Col. ii. 9. He whose name is, Emmanuel, *God with us*, Matt. i. 23, or *God manifest in the flesh*, 1 Tim. iii. 16, he must know the Father with such an exquisite knowledge, as far transcends the reach of all our ideas.

Let it be noted also, that the blessed Jesus came down from heaven not only to shew God all-glorious to men, but to make him appear all-lovely and desirable in the eyes of sinners, by representing him in all the wonders of his compassion and forgiving mercy. Even a great, a just, and a holy God, is lovely and amiable in the sight of guilty creatures, when he is willing to *reconcile the world to himself* in and by his Son Jesus Christ, not imputing to them their iniquities; 2 Cor. v. 19. Such a sight of God is the first attractive of our love.

2. It is the Son of God who came to inform us what God has done for us, and thereby to engage our love. The reason of man, and our daily experience, teach us that he is the author of our being and our blessings; *He causes the sun to shine, and his rain to descend on the earth;* Matt. v. 45. *He gives us fruitful seasons, and fills our hearts with food and gladness;* Acts xiv. 17. But it is Jesus who has told us the eternal counsels of his Father's love, and what kind designs he formed for our recovery from sin and hell, when, in his own fore-knowledge, he beheld us fallen and miserable: He has told us what eternal and unfailing provision God has made for us, by giving us into the hands of his Son, even into those hands where he has entrusted the infinite concerns of his own honor; and that he appointed his Son to redeem our lives, by his own bloody death.

This is love glorious indeed, and fit to allure and kindle our warmest affections to God. It is the blessed Son of God himself, who, by his Father's appointment, has suffered agonies and sorrows of unknown kinds, unknown degrees, for us. *He poured out his own soul to death* to secure us from the deserved wrath and vengeance of God; he sustained many a painful stroke, to make a way for us to partake of his Father's mercy, and to render the offended Majesty of heaven a proper and more engaging object of our love.

3. Again, it is this same glorious person, the Son of God, who

has informed us at large, not only what God has already done, but what he will do for us; and has given us the hope of everlasting blessings. He has confirmed all the words of grace that God spake to men by angels and prophets in former ages; and he has added many a rich and most express promise of a glorious resurrection, and a future state, and set them before us in a divine light, beyond what the prophets or the angels ever knew in ancient times: He has assured returning sinners of the pardon of highest crimes, and the most aggravated iniquities; and he has secured the everlasting favor and presence of God to all his followers; for by the Father's appointment he is gone *to prepare mansions of glory for them, that where he is they may be also*; that they may dwell with him, and with his Father for ever.

Thus it appears that our everlasting thanks and praises are due to the blessed Jesus, who has laid the foundation of love between an offended God and his guilty creature, man. He has revealed the great God to us, has told us what he is, and has set him before us, in his most amiable glories; He has taught us what wonders of mercy God hath wrought for us already, and what blessings he will bestow on us, through the future ages of eternity: And thus he hath opened all the springs of love to allure our hearts to God. What Christian can withhold his love and praise from so worthy, so divine a benefactor?

Reflection IV. I may therefore well add, in the last place, that no person in heaven or earth was so proper to recommend to us this divine virtue, the love of God, as Christ Jesus, our Saviour, who speaks the words of my text: he who was himself the beloved Son of God, the first favorite of heaven, the highest object of his Father's love, and the best and most perfect lover of his Father: He who was the great peacemaker between God and sinners, the chief minister and messenger of his Father's love to men. If he had not undertook to make peace, we had still continued *children of wrath*, and in the same state with fallen angels, who are never invited to return to the love of God. There is no prophet, no messenger sent to require or charge them to love God, for there is no priest or peacemaker appointed for them.

Who is so fit a person to urge upon our consciences this blessed command of love to God, as he who came to redeem us from our state of rebellion and enmity, to deliver us from the anger of God, and *the curse of the law*, and everlasting death? Who can give us such pathetic motives, and so powerful a charge to *love the Lord our God with our whole heart*, as he who came to write his Father's love to us in lines of blood, even his own blood? He whose heart

was pierced for the sake of sinful men ; he who came to seal the covenant of love between God and man with the anguish of his soul, and the blood of his heart ! How all-glorious and well-chosen is this messenger of the love and precepts of God ! this blessed Prophet, who is sent from God to recommend to us the eternal duty of divine love ; who is also our *great High Priest* to reconcile us to God ! Yet how little success has the message had on the hearts of men ! What a sad and just occasion of shame and holy mourning ! Forbid it, O God, that such a messenger and such a message should be sent from heaven in vain !

MEDITATION. "What shall I do to become a true lover of God ? Since I know there is but one God, I would give up my whole heart to him alone ; I would fain have him reign in my affections supreme and without a rival. But let me recollect myself a little, and let me not deny what God and his grace have wrought in my soul. Do I not love him sincerely, and above all things ? Am I not possessed of those qualifications which are contained and implied in the affectionate and supreme love of God ? Let me run over them in meditation and self-enquiry.

"Have I not beheld him as the first and the best of beings ? Have I not seen him most glorious in himself, and worthy of the highest esteem and love ? Am I not deeply convinced and firmly persuaded that he is the only all-sufficient good ? That he is the overflowing spring of grace and blessedness ? Have I not been taught to see the vanity and emptiness of all things beneath and besides God, and that without him I can never arrive at true happiness ? Has he not the most transcendent place in my esteem ? Yes, O Lord, through thy grace I can say, the creatures are nothing in comparison of thee ; nor can any thing appear in my eyes more lovely and more desirable than God and his love.

"Again : have I not been invited and raised by thy grace to some humble hope of thy favor ? Hast thou not revealed thyself, in thy word, as a God condescending to be reconciled to sinners, willing to be reconciled to me ? As a God willing to make creatures happy, even every creature that desires to centre itself in God, and take up its rest in him : O that sublime, that most excellent, that supreme Being, the holy and blessed God ! How merciful ! How compassionate ! Have I not seen him in his word descending within the reach of my hope ? And have I not rejoiced to think that he gives me leave to hope in him, as an eternal portion for my soul, and that he holds out the arm of his love to receive me ?

"May I not proceed yet further, O my God ? Has not my will

been drawn powerfully toward thee, and made choice of thee as my everlasting good ? Have I not turned my back upon creatures at thy call, and divided myself from every thing, that I might be more nearly united to thee ? Have I not renounced them all, that I might be entirely the Lord's ? Does not my soul with firm purpose cleave to thee, as my immortal portion, and my ever-during inheritance ?

" Yet again, O my Lord, does not my heart sometimes go out after thee, with most pleasing sensations ! O that I could say it never wandered ! But I humbly hope it will never, never be at rest while absent from God. Sometimes, like the needle that is feebly touched with the sovereign influence of the loadstone, it may be drawn aside by other influences, and it is too ready to wander from the beloved point : But may I not appeal to thee, O my God, that, like the needle, it is ever restless till it point to thee again, to thee, the object of my strongest desire, and my supreme love ?

" Are not my flesh and spirit, with all their active powers, under the command of this divine principle, this holy fire of love ? Does not this heavenly affection reign in my soul over all my faculties, all my senses, and all my passions ? Are not all my little affairs in this world, and all my more important concerns, regulated and governed by this holy love ? Canst thou bear the thought, O my soul, of acting contrary to this inward vital and reigning principle ? Are not all my mortal interests subdued and devoted to divine love, and all my immortal interests united and summed up in it ? *Whom have I in heaven, O Lord, but thee, and what is there on earth that I desire in comparison of thee ? Psalm lxxiii. 25.*

" These eyes of mine, whither shall they look but toward thee ? These feet, whither shall they go but on thy messages ? What shall these hands do, but the work which thou appointest them ? What is there that my tongue is employed in, with so much delight, as in speaking of thee, and to thee, *my Lord, and my God ?* All that I am, and all that I have, is thine for ever and ever : Am I not then a sincere lover ?

" Blessed be the name of Jesus, the Son of God, and my Saviour, that has descended from heaven to dwell with dust and ashes, that he might bring such worthless wretches as we are within the attractive force of divine love : Our sins stood between God and man like a wall of dreadful separation ; but by his glorious atonement he has removed the bar, and made the way of access to God free and open, that God and man might be united in the bond of perpetual love : He called sinners by his own voice, and he calls them

still by the words of his gospel, to partake of this privilege. O blessed Messenger of divine love! And he sends down his own Spirit from heaven, where he dwells, to make us willing to partake of this felicity, and to draw our hearts near to God. Come, O Divine Spirit, come, dwell in this heart of mine, as an unchangeable principle of holy love! Guard my heart from all meaner allurements and influences, while I am travelling through the dangerous region of this world, till I am arrived beyond the reach of danger, till I rest for ever in the bosom of God, my supreme love, and my everlasting all."

## DISCOURSE II.

### DIVINE LOVE IS THE COMMANDING PASSION.

HAVING declared at large, in the former sermon, what is implied in the supreme love of God; the second general head of discourse requires me to shew, how this one passion of divine love will influence all the other affections of the heart. The whole world are witnesses to this effect of love in the common affairs of mankind; and this powerful passion still retains its own nature and sovereignty over the rest, when God is the object of it, which will appear in the following instances:

I. If the soul be warmed with divine love, “the various discoveries that God makes of himself to us, will not only be matter of frequent contemplation, but of pleasing wonder.” Admiration or wonder is a noble passion, arising from the view of something that is new and strange, or upon the notice of some rare and uncommon object: Now when so glorious and transcendent a Being, as the great and blessed God, becomes the object of our notice and our love, with what pleasure do we survey his glories, which are so rare, so uncommon, that there are none to compare with them? We shall meditate on the surprising discoveries that he has made of himself, till we find new matter of holy admiration in all of them. Sincere and fervent love is ever finding some new beauties and wonders in the person so much beloved.

The lover of God traces the footsteps of infinite wisdom and all-sufficient power, in the works of nature and providence: *When he beholds the heavens, the works of the fingers of God, and the moon and stars which he has created*, Psalm viii. 3, he first observes their immense vastness, their order and beauty, and wonders at the skill and divine contrivance of him that made them: *O Lord, how great, how manifold are thy works!* *In wisdom hast thou made them all*; Psalm civ. 24. And then he wonders again at the condescending goodness of God to his little creature, man: *Lord, what is man, that thou art mindful of him, or the son of man, that thou shouldst visit him?* Psalm viii. 4. The loving-kindness of God has many admirable circumstances in it, as well as his wisdom and power; and therefore the royal Psalmist calls it marvellous;

*Psalm xxxi. 21*, and spends many a psalm in the devout admiration of it.

Many of the providences of God are surprising: *He alone doth great wonders*; *Psalm cxvvi. 4*. In the heavens and in the earth *he doth things unsearchable, marvellous things without number*; *Job v. 9*. The soul that loves God will recall his ancient wonders with sweet delight, *Psalm lxxvii. 11*, and will take notice of all his marvellous ways in his present conduct of the world and the church.

There is sufficient matter in God, for the pleasurable and everlasting entertainment of this holy passion: He is an immense ocean of glories and wonders. There is nothing in God but what would be marvellous and astonishing to us, if we had our eyes divinely enlightened, and our hearts fired with divine love. Every creature has something in it that surpasses our knowledge, and commands our admiration: But what are all these in comparison of God, the all-wise and almighty artificer, who made them all by his wisdom, and the breath of his mouth? The soul that loves God is ready to see and take notice of God in every thing: He walks through the fields, he observes the wonders of divine workmanship in every different tree on his right hand and on his left, in the herbs and flowers that he treads with his feet, in the rich diversity of shapes and colors and ornaments of nature: He beholds and admires his God in them all. He sees the birds in their airy flight, or perched upon the branches, and sending forth their various melody: He observes the grazing flocks, and the larger cattle in their different forms and manners of life; he looks down upon little insects, and takes notice of their vigorous and busy life and motions, their shining bodies, and their golden or painted wings; he beholds and he admires his God in them all: In the least things of nature, he can read the greatness of God, and it is what of God he finds in the creature that renders creatures more delightful to him. Creatures are but his steps to help him to rise toward God.

If it were possible for our admiration, to run through and finish all the marvellous things of nature and providence, there would remain still a vast field of wonders in his word, in his law, in his gospel, in his transactions of grace with the children of men. David, that intense lover of God, was ever meditating on his statutes, his word, his testimonies; he searched *wondrous things out of his law*; *Psalm cxix. 18*, and ever found something in them worthy of his high esteem, and his holy joy. *O how I love thy law! it is my meditation all the day. I have seen an end of all perfection, but thy commandments are exceeding broad*; *Psalm cxix. 96, 97*. But above all, the riches of mercy manifested in

the gospel, awaken and raise the holy soul to a sublime degree of astonishment. *This is the Lord's doing indeed, and it is marvellous in our eyes ; Psalm cxviii. 23.* This was the mystery that was hid in God, and kept secret since the world began ; it was concealed from ages and generations, and is now made manifest, to the intent that now unto principalities and powers of heaven, as well as men on earth, might be made known by the church, the manifold, the amazing wisdom of God ; Rom. xvi. 25. Ephes. iii. 9. There is enough in this gospel to raise the wonder even of the sinners that refuse it : *Hear, ye despisers, and wonder, and perish ; Acts xiii. 41.* Much more will it seize and employ the admiring powers of every holy soul that has tasted of the love of God, and been partaker of this salvation. There is a divine and tenfold pleasure attends this exercise of sacred admiration, while the soul, in the language of faith and love, can say, *Thou art the God, who alone doest wonders, and thou art my God for ever and ever.*

I might add after all, there is yet still another world of wonders to employ the lover of God, and that is, the person of his Son Jesus Christ our Saviour. There God discovers himself in his fullest grace and wisdom, in his highest power and perfection. The attributes of the Father shine transcendently glorious in his Son, and become the object of love and wonder to men and angels. He is the fairest *image of the invisible God, the first-born of every creature ; Col. i. 16.* *He is the brightness of the Father's glory, and the express image of his person ; Heb. i. 3.* All the marvellous things that God the Father ever wrought, it was in and by his Son. Did he create all things out of nothing ? It was by Jesus Christ ; *Eph. iii. 9.* Does he govern the world with amazing wisdom ? It is by making his Son Jesus the Governor and Lord of all things. Does he redeem and save guilty sinners from everlasting misery ? These wonders of mercy are transacted by the cradle and the cross of Jesus, by the death and the life of Christ, by the sorrows, the sufferings, and the victories of the Son of God. *His name is called Wonderful ; Isaiah ix. 6.* For he who is the child born, is also the mighty God : The infant of days is the everlasting Father, the first and the last, the beginning and the end of all things. What sublime and sacred raptures of love and wonder join together, when a devout Christian contemplates his God in his nature, in his providences, in all his works, in the pages of his holy book, and in the face of his Son the blessed Jesus ! But I have dwelt too long amidst these divine wonders : the following particulars must be more briefly handled.

II. Divine love will command the affection of holy desire. A

sense of the favor of God, and the influences of his grace, will be the matter of our most intense wishes and importunate requests. We shall long for the presence of God above all things, both here and hereafter. This was the fixed desire, this the passionate aspiration of the holy Psalmist: *Psalm cxix. 58. I entreated thy favor with my whole heart.* What warm and pathetic language breaks from the lips of this great saint, this sublime lover of God, in the xlii, lxiii, and lxxxiv. Psalms! *My soul longeth, yea, fainteth for the courts of the Lord, my heart and my flesh cry out for the living God.* *As the hart panteth after water-brooks, so doth my soul after thee, O God.* *Early, O God, will I seek thee, for thy loving-kindness is better than life.* When he dwells in his own palace he longs for the divine presence; *Psalm ci. 2 : I will walk within my house with a perfect heart ; O when wilt thou come unto me ?* But his eminent desire is to dwell for ever in the sanctuary: *One thing have I desired of the Lord, that will I seek after, that I may ever abide in his house, there to behold the beauty of the Lord, and to enquire and converse with him in his holy temple ; Psalm xxvii. 4.* O happy soul, where all these active springs of passion are touched and influenced by divine grace ! Hunger and thirst, and all the longing powers and appetites of animal nature, are too few and too feeble to express the holy desires of a soul breathing after the presence of its God.

III. When the love of God reigns in the heart, all the joys and pleasures of the man will unite and centre in God. It will be our sweetest satisfaction, and most exalted delight, to have God ever near us, and to be ever near to God. As absence from God is a pain at the heart of a lively Christian, fired with divine love, so his glorious presence is his chief joy. With what affectionate language does the holy soul of David rejoice in God, as his God, and how does he employ the charming arts of poesy and music to express his own joys and the praises of his almighty Friend ! One must run through a multitude of his Psalms to copy out the bright expressions of holy delight which he found in the love of God ; even the prospect and hope of waiting on him in his holy temple, fills his spirit with sacred pleasure ; *Psalm xliii. 4 : I will go to the altar of God, unto God my exceeding joy, yea, upon the harp will I praise thee, O God, my God.* *Psalm lxiii. 5, 6. When I remember thee on my bed, and meditate on thee in the night watches, my soul shall be satisfied as with marrow and fatness, and my mouth shall praise thee with joyful lips.*

This joy which is derived from the love of God, is supreme over all other joys, and independent of other comforts : When all

the nether springs of delight among creatures are dried up, this is a fountain of eternal pleasure, a spring of overflowing delight. *Hab. iii. 17-19: Though the fig-tree shall not blossom, and there shall be no fruit in the vine, though the field shall yield no meat, and the flock shall be cut off from the fold, yet the Lord is my strength, I will rejoice in the Lord, and joy in the God of my salvation.*

IV. Where the love of God prevails in the heart, every thing that belongs to God, his word, his institutions, his church and people, will in some proportion be the objects of our choice and love, of our holy desires and delight. Has God condescended to give us his word, to write a book of knowledge and grace for the use of men? How much delight will the holy soul take in reading and hearing the blessed words of this book! A flame of heavenly love kindled in the heart, will engage us to converse often with those divine notices of himself, which God has sent us from heaven. Our *delight will be placed in the law, and gospel of our God, and therein shall we meditate day and night; Psalm i. 2. O how I love thy law,* says David, *it is my meditation all the day;* and in the night he remembers the name of God; *Psalm cxix. 55, 97.*

Has the great God built a temple for himself on earth, even the assemblies of the saints? Has he appointed methods of worship in which men shall address his Majesty, and whereby he will make them partakers of his love? How desirous is the lively Christian to attend on all these methods of divine appointment, to abide in the sanctuary, to frequent *the house of prayer*, and wait for the manifestations of the power and glory of God? *I have loved the habitation of thy house,* says David, *and the place where thy honor dwelleth;* *Psalm xxvi. 8. How amiable are thy tabernacles, O Lord of Hosts!* *Ixxxiv. 1.*

Has God raised up children for himself, out of the sons and daughters of fallen Adam? Then every one *that loves God, will love his offspring too;* *1 John v. 1.* This is one of the chief evidences of a sincere love to God, when we love his people, and those who bear his image, without the narrow view of a sect or party, or particular tribe of such a name. The saint loves all the saints, and the Christian loves all Christians; those who are most like to God *are the excellent of the earth, in whom is all his delight;* *Psalm xvi. 2.* And therefore he pities them under all their sorrows, and he relieves their wants according to his power, because they stand in so near a relation to the God whom he loves, and bear his lovely image; *1 John iii. 16, 17.*

Has the great and glorious God one peculiar Son, his first-born,

his only-begotten, who bears his perfect image, and whom he loves above all the rest? this also is the chief object of a Christian's love. Not father nor mother, son nor daughter, nor the wife of the bosom, lies so near the heart of a Christian, as the Son of God doth. He not only bears the nearest resemblance to God, but *he is one with God*; *in him dwells all the fulness of the Godhead bodily*; Col. ii. 9. He is Emmanuel, *God with us*; Matt. i. 23. *God manifested in the flesh*; 1 Tim. iii. 16. There is more of the power and wisdom, there is more of the majesty and mercy of God shines through the human nature of his Son Jesus, than in all the millions of men and angels, and all the worlds of unknown creatures that God ever made: and therefore the sanctified affections of the soul go forth in the strongest manner towards Jesus, the Son of God: He is in their eyes *the chiefest of ten thousand, altogether lovely*.

V. Where the passion of divine love reigns gloriously in the heart, every creature separated from God will fall under a holy neglect and contempt. Nothing will serve or satisfy the good man, in the room and place of his God. All things, when laid in the balance, *are lighter than vanity*; *they are, in his esteem, like a small dust of the earth before a mountain, or the drop of a bucket*, when compared with the ocean; *Isaiah xl. 15*. The language of such a soul is, *whom have I in heaven but thee, and there is none upon earth that I desire besides thee*; Psalm lxxiii. 25. Creatures, with all their attractives and allurements, have no power to charm his heart away from God: The divine lover is *crucified to the world*; it is like a dead thing to him, tasteless, disrelishing, worthless and vain: There is a vast emptiness, and wide and universal desolation in the world, if the soul see not God in it.

Business and diversions, cities and palaces, with their various ornaments, fields and groves, spring, summer and autumn, with all their flowery beauties, and their tasteful blessings, are some of the delights of the sons of men: Books and learning, and polite company, and refined science, are the more elegant joys of ingenious spirits: These things are the enticing gratifications of the senses of the mind of man: They are all innocent in themselves, they may be sanctified to divine purposes, and afford double satisfaction if God be amongst them: But if God be absent, if he hide his face, or frown upon the soul, not palaces, nor groves, nor fields, not business nor diversions, not all the flowery or tasteful blessings of spring or summer, not the more refined joys of books and learning, and elegant company, not all the rich provisions of nature or art, can entertain or refresh, can satisfy or please the soul of a Christian, who is smitten with the love of his God.

I add further, if the affectionate Christian find not God even in his church and ordinances ; if his mind be not raised to heavenly objects in the house of God, and in his sacred institutions, they are all empty and unsatisfying ; there is no life nor pleasure in them : A hypocrite is content with outward forms, and is well pleased with having paid his devoirs, and made his appearance in the church ; but the heart that loves God sincerely, cannot be satisfied with mere bodily devotion, nor with any pictures, shadows, or emblems of divine things, unless God, who is the life, the spirit, and the substance, be there, and manifest himself in a way of mercy ; unless God fill his own institution with his own presence, that is, with the influences of his grace, with the enlightening, the sanctifying, and the comforting operations of his own Spirit.

VI. The love of God prevailing in the heart, will awaken zeal and activity, and holy delight, not only in the duties of worship, but in all manner of services for God in the world. Can I do any thing for God whom I love ? saith the Christian, that shall be my joyful work. There is no labor or fatigue too much to sustain, no suffering too hard to endure, for the sake of God, who is so supremely beloved. What shall I do to honor the King of heaven, and to render him honorable in the earth ? How shall I spread his glory before the eyes of men, who in himself is so transcendently glorious ? and *what shall I render to the Lord my God, for the multitude of mercies* which he has conferred upon me ? *Psalm cxvi. 13.* Divine love will make the law of God delightful in the practice of it, and none of his precepts will be a burden to the affectionate and lively Christian ; *1 John v. 3.* *This is the love of God, that we keep his commandments ; and his commandments are not grievous.*

The soul that loves God will be always aspiring after greater degrees of holiness, because it renders the man more like God : It is commonly said of friendship or sincere love, that it either finds or makes persons like to each other. Love to God is an assimilating principle ; it works more and more, till we are transformed by degrees into his image : And if we are affectionate lovers of God, we shall never be perfectly pleased with ourselves till we are delivered from the bondage of this sinful flesh, till we wake out of this dull and stupid state, into the world of spirits made perfect, and are there satisfied with the likeness of God. This heavenly delight shall be yet more exalted when our bodies shall be raised in the likeness of our glorified Redeemer, and our flesh and soul together shall be made to resemble the holy Jesus in greater perfection, who is the first and the nearest image of God. With what a gust of sacred pleasure does the beloved disciple express himself ; *1 John iii. 1, 2.*

*We shall be like him, when we shall see him as he is ;* and when with David we wake out of the dust of death, we shall see the face of God in righteousness, and be satisfied with his complete likeness; *Psalm xvii. 15.*

VII. Every thing that offends or dishonors the blessed God, will be a matter of hatred and aversion to the divine lover: And every thing whereby God has been offended in time past, will be the occasion of shame and grief. *I hate vain thoughts,* saith holy David, *but thy law do I love;* *Psalm cxix. 113.* Sin is the object of constant hatred in all its views, because it is contrary to the nature, the will, and the law of God, who is the supreme object of love: The good man is exceeding fearful of doing any thing that may offend or displease his God. When his soul looks back upon his own sins, he finds abundant matter for sorrow and holy shame, for self-resentment and pious indignation. “O how hateful have all my sinful thoughts been ! My proud, my angry, and my revengeful thoughts ! That covetousness, that malice and envy, which have been working in my heart ! Those wandering imaginations which have called me away from the blessed God, even from the midst of his worship ! How vile and guilty is my tongue, because of the foolish, and passionate, and sinful words that I have spoken ! What a multitude of evil actions have been scattered up and down throughout my life, and intermixed with my behavior towards God and man !” All these create bitter uneasiness and pain in the remembrance, because they are offences against a God who is supremely beloved. What holy confusion, what meltings of heart in secret sorrow, do the true lovers of God feel, after they have indulged temptation, fallen under some more grievous sin, defiled their consciences, and dishonored their God ? What pangs of inward remorse, and what sincere indignation against themselves ? And as an evidence of their love to God, they sometimes see reason to confess and bewail their folly, even in the sight of men. Holy David was not backward upon such occasions, to confess his grief for having offended his God: We may read the mournings of his love, in his penitential Psalms, particularly *Psalm li. 3, 4, 17;* and he offers *a broken and a contrite heart* in sacrifice to that God whom he had offended.

A true and affectionate lover of God is pained at the heart, and feels a sensible inward sorrow to see how iniquity abounds in the land, to behold the laws of God broken by his fellow-creatures, and his holy name blasphemed. *I beheld the transgressors, and I was grieved, because they kept not thy word : Rivers of tears run down my eyes,* because men break thy holy law ; *Psalm cxix. 136, 158.*

VIII. Every thing that has a tendency to divide the soul from God is matter of religious jealousy and holy fear. Divine love hath its jealousies : If we love God with intense affection we shall feel an inward anxiousness and solicitude, lest our hearts *depart from the living God*, and lest God should hide himself in his displeasure from our souls. This is what holy David is ever afraid of, and begs that God would not hide himself in anger. The apostle Jude, verse 21, bids us *keep ourselves in the love of God* : The holy soul will watch against every thing that may begin a separation or break the divine friendship, and it grows jealous of every thing that comes too near the heart.

When the true lover of God is deeply engaged in the businesses of the present world, he manages them with a pious caution, lest his soul should be immersed and drowned with overwhelming cares, or overladen with increasing riches ; he is watchful, and afraid lest the dust and rubbish of this world should bury the holy seed in the heart, should obstruct the growth of religion, should carry off the thoughts from God to idols of gold and silver, and thus defile the soul. If he has any share amongst the honors and equipages, the gay diversions and pleasures of life, he is afraid lest they should fill his heart with vanity, lest they should tincture his spirit with sensuality and intemperance, and thus take away the taste and relish of divine love. If Providence call him sometimes into vain and wicked company, he is afraid of tarrying too many hours in the midst of them, lest *evil communications should corrupt good manners* ; 1 Cor. xv. 33, and therefore *he will not stand among the counsels of the ungodly*, nor walk in the way where sinners dwell ; Psalm i. 1. He shuns them as a pestilence, because their ways are contrary to the pure and holy nature of that God whom he loves.

Those studies, those employments, those recreations and amusements, which make the heart forget God, or withhold it too long from him, are uneasy and painful to a soul inflamed with divine love. As it is the language of the sinner who is weary of God, *When will the new moon be over, and the sabbath be done*, that I may return to my trade and my labor, to my buying and selling, and the daily business of this dying life ? So the sincere lover of God is ready to say, What, nothing but business and labor for *the bread that perisheth* ? Nothing but buying and selling, and seeking gold and silver, food and raiment ? Alas, how unhappily am I detained all the day from my God by these embarrassments ! When will the evening come, and the season of pious retirement ?

When will the sabbath appear, that I may spend my hours with God, and begin to try what heaven is !

IX. Where the divine principle of the love of God reigns in the heart, all sinful passions toward God and men will be subdued by it.

1. Toward God. One would think, indeed, that man should not dare to indulge any sinful passion toward his Maker ; but so corrupt are our hearts, that we dislike the holy nature of God, we are displeased with his will, and his holy commandments are grievous to us, till the love of God subdue this inward aversion of the heart to holiness, and reconcile us to the law of God by the constraining influence of divine love.

Again, we are ready to repine at the hand of the Lord, to murmur against heaven, and to quarrel with our Maker, when we meet with disappointments in our affairs : We are inclined to grow peevish and fretful against Providence, when we lose some desirable comfort, or sustain some heavy sorrow, or long and tiresome sickness ; but holy love silences every murmur, and quashes every repining thought. Where the love of God prevails, afflictive scenes of life will never awaken resentment against heaven, but always meet with patient submission. The sacred lover is not angry with his God when he smites him, for he ever supposes there is a just reason for every stroke of his Father's rod : "Either," says he, "my sins have deserved his correcting hand, or these sorrows are sent to examine what grace there is in my heart, and to make trial of my faith : Still I am persuaded there is love at the bottom of all these troubles, and it is the hand of love that smites me ; for my Saviour hath said it. *Rev. iii. 19. As many as I love, I rebuke and chasten ;* and the holy apostle assures us, *Heb. xii. 6.*, that *God corrects every son whom he receives.*

2. Divine love mortifies and subdues our disorderly and sinful passions toward our fellow-creatures ; Wrath, revenge, malice, envy, are all subdued and kept under by this sovereign principle of divine love. The soul, in whom this sacred passion keeps a constant flame, is not easily roused to a wrathful or resenting temper, by the affronts and injuries we sustain from men. The lover of God is meek and gentle under many insults and reproaches : He can forbear and forgive, for he knows that his God hath borne long with him, and forgiven him ten thousand provocation. Thus the sovereignty of divine love appears, in that it can suppress as well as raise the other passions.

X. Where divine love reigns in eminent degrees, there will be an humble, holy desire to pass even through death itself to meet

with God, the supreme object of love, and to dwell for ever in his presence. If faith be not too feeble, or the frailties of animal nature too prevalent, the divine lover will encounter death with courage, and with sacred joy, because it will bring him to the enjoyment of his God. When *the dust returns to earth, the soul* of every man *returns to God* as a judge, and the soul of a good man to God as a friend, and Father, and rewarder; *Eccles.* xii. 7. If we are *absent from the body*, we shall be *present with the Lord*; *2 Cor.* v. 8. In this view of things, the holy lover is ready to say, What is there in death so terrible, that the presence of Christ, and the enjoyment of my God, has not something infinitely more delightful to overbalance it? *Love is stronger than death.*

The love of God has been found stronger in a holy soul than all the pangs and terrors of death, even a death of violence and martyrdom. The one influences and impels toward heaven more powerfully than the other can terrify or discourage. United faith and love have passed through fires of torment, and seas of blood, in order to see God, and dwell with him in his heavenly habitation. This leads to the next particular.

In the last place I add, that as hell will be matter of utmost aversion and holy fear to a sincere lover of God, because it is an everlasting separation from God, so heaven will be the object of desire and joyful hope, because there God manifests himself to all that love him in his highest glory and richest grace. The soul that loves God with warm affection, cannot bear those dreadful words, *2 Thess.* i. 9. of being *punished with everlasting destruction from the presence of the Lord*. To be *without God in the world*, during the short space of our continuance here, is a very formidable and grievous thing to the good man; but to be cursed and condemned to depart from God for ever, this is the very hell of hell, if I may so express it, in the esteem of the soul that loves God: To be divided for ever from God, the spring of life and love, and all happiness; to be separated for ever from God, the infinite and the all-sufficient good; to be thrust out for ever from the presence of God, the most lovely and the best of beings; to see him no more, to love him no more, and to be for ever banished from his love; the very thought of it gives the holy soul more anguish than it is able to bear.

On the other hand, heaven, which is the dwelling-place of the Most High, is the mark which the good man ever aims at, that he may see God face to face. When his love rises high, he is ever breathing passionately after this blessedness, and lives with delight upon the promises which give him this joyful hope. *Blessed are*

*the pure in heart, for they shall see God ; Matt. v. 8.* The good man's affections are set on the things above, where Christ is at the right hand of God ; Col. iii. 1, 2. His treasure is on high, and his heart is there also ; Matt. vi. 21. If we love God with all the heart, we shall keep heaven always in our eye. The foretaste of it will be our present comfort and support ; the thoughts of being for ever with God, will sweeten all the sorrows of life, will take away the bitterness of affliction, and ease the pains of death. As Jacob cheerfully sustained a hard servitude of seven years in Ch<sup>t</sup>deia, through heat and cold, through frosts and wind, and sunbeams, for the love of Rachel, so the Christian endures all the labors and conflicts, all the fatigues and distresses of life in this lower world with patience, and with holy pleasure, in hope to dwell for ever with God, whom his soul loves supremely above all creatures.

Thus I have finished the second general head which I proposed ; and produced a variety of instances, wherein this sacred and sovereign affection of divine love commands and influences, excites or subdues the other passions of nature, and makes them all subservient to its own great designs, that is, to the honor and to the enjoyment of God, the object of this divine affection.

Before I proceed to the third general head, I shall endeavor to improve this discourse by these three useful reflections :

Reflection I. "How happy and easy a rule is here given us to examine how stands our love to God, and whether we love him *with all our heart !*" Are the other passions of nature influenced by this love ? Surely it is impossible for us, in this present state of flesh and blood, to love God with our whole hearts, and yet to feel no sensible workings of fear or hope, desire or anger, in correspondence with this holy passion : To have no pleasures nor sorrows, no holy longings, nor holy joys, acting in concert with this principle of divine love.

Believe me, sirs, there are no outward actions, no visible attendances on public worship, no bodily services, no costly sacrifices, can so happily evidence our sincere love to God, as the steady and constant workings of the other inward powers of nature, in conformity to this holy principle. A hundred outward plausible actions may be the cloak of vice, the disguise of hypocrisy. Vain Pharisees may *make broad their phylacteries, may tithe* their herds and their flocks as well as *mint and cummin*, may give much alms, or build hospitals and churches ; but the various inward affections of nature can never be kept in any regular and steady exercise of piety, by all the toil and skill of a hypocrite. And on the other hand, if the heart be thoroughly devoted to the love of God, this love will

reign sovereign among the other passions. The other passions will obey love, and we may judge by their obedience how far the love of God prevails.

Reflection II. "If mankind be examined by this rule, how few sincere lovers of God will be found among them!" It is a vain thing for a man to say, "I love God with all my heart," when his strongest desires and his most relishing joys centre in meaner objects; when his highest hopes and his most painful fears, his deepest anxieties and disquietudes of mind, are always raised and sunk again by the things of this world only, and the changing scenes of this mortal state. Alas! how few are there whose love to God does not fall under some just suspicion, when brought to this test! Let us survey the world round about us, and observe what it is that influences the various passions of men, even those who are called Christians, and would be thought the disciples of Christ.

Some have their hearts so filled with the business of this life, and the love of money, as their chief idol, that all their desires, their fears and their hopes, and the perpetual course and labor of all their powers, keep this point ever in view and in warm pursuit: The disappointment of a small sum, the loss of a few pounds, will hang upon their spirits with a constant heaviness, and create them more pain than twenty sins against God their Maker. What shall we think of these people, who love riches so well, that if their hands and their heads would hold out, and daylight would last, they would never be weary of this chase, nor require cessation or respite? Does the love of God appear as the supreme and reigning passion in such earthly souls as these? There have been some in all ages, and there are the successors of them in our day, who have loved gold and silver with so warm a passion, even to the very end of life, that if they could but have contrived how to carry it away with them to the other world, there would have been but little silver, and scarce any gold, left in our world long ere this time. This has employed their morning thoughts and evening affections, their earnest wishes, and their busy fingers day and night, so as to leave little room for the love of God and religion.

Others there are who make honor and esteem, or perhaps the grandeur, and pomp, and equipage of life, the chief object of their love. Their hopes and cares, their desires and enquiries are, How shall I shine among men, and make a figure in the world? Every gay gilded thing they see raises their wishes: Ambition, honor, and applause, engage their whole souls: A fancied contempt or neglect of them stirs their jealousy, and awakens all their uneasy passions. They mourn more, and are more inwardly and deeply

vexed for one reproachful word from men, than for all their own affronts to the great and blessed God. Can the love of God reign in a heart so puffed up and filled with self and vanity?

There are others again, whose idol is pleasure and vain delight. A round of pleasing amusements, a succession of sensualities, is their chief good: This employs their constant contrivances, this engages their hopes and fears, and every passion. They spend their anxious enquiries upon the gratification of appetite, humor and fancy: *What shall I eat, and what shall I drink?* How shall I dine elegantly, and regale myself at the table? What are the most luxurious dishes in season, and where shall I find gay or merry company in the evening? The tavern or the meaner drinking-house, the comedy or the ball, and every place of pastime, whether lawful or unlawful, detain their souls as well as their bodies, and engage their thoughts long beforehand. Does the sincere love of God reign in such sort of spirits?

These are the things that busy and engross the daily passions of men, and scarce a small corner of their hearts is left for God and religion. But let us remember, God is an all-glorious and sovereign Being, his holy jealousy forbids him to accept of a corner of the heart. He refuses and despairs every lover that does not give up his whole self to him with all his powers. *Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul:* Every affection must and will be employed in a pious manner, where divine love is, as it always ought to be, the supreme passion. But, alas! how few souls are thus moulded and refined; how few are regulated and governed by so divine a principle! Man is the creature of God, and owes his all to him; but the creature man does not love his Creator.

Reflection III. If divine love be so sovereign and ruling an affection, then "the best and noblest method for governing all the passions, is to get the love of God rooted in the heart, and to see that it maintain its supreme dominion there." What uneasy creatures are we made by our various passions. How often do they disquiet and torment the soul! How headstrong is their violence, like a horse unbroken and untamed! How sudden are their starts! Their motions how wild and various! And how unruly are their efforts! Now if one had but one sovereign bridle, that could reach and manage them all; one golden rein that would hold in all their unruly motions, and would also excite and guide them at pleasure; what an invaluable instrument would this be to mortals! Surely such an instrument is the love of God, such an invaluable regulator

of all the passionate powers ; and it will have this effect, where it is strong and supreme, as it ought to be.

You that are daily disturbed and led astray by rising passions of various kinds, come to the lectures of the gospel, come to the doctrine of the blessed Jesus : Come, see the love of God displayed in its most surprising and powerful colors ; come, learn to love your Maker, dressed in the riches of his grace : And may your souls be fired with divine love, till all your carnal fetters are melted off ; till you exult in a divine liberty ; till you lead captivity captive, and reign and triumph over all your vicious affections, which had so often before disquieted and enslaved you.

And here again we may take up a melancholy complaint, how few are there who are taught to regulate their passions by divine love ! What wild work do these unruly powers make among mankind ! How dreadfully do they carry away multitudes into mischief and ruin for want of this holy government ! How very few have attained this heavenly gift, this sacred principle, this golden rein of universal influence, that would hold in, and guide and manage all the passions to glorious advantage !

MEDITATION. "But it is time now, O my soul, to call thy thoughts away from the multitudes of mankind, and to look carefully into thyself. There is reason enough for grief and lamentation indeed, if we survey the thousands round about us, who are mere slaves to their earthly passions, who let them loose among creatures, and shew very few tokens and evidences of a supreme love to their Creator : But would it not be matter of far more painful, more penetrating and inward sorrow, if thou shouldst carry this evidence, this test of divine love, into thy own retirements, and shouldst hardly be able to prove thyself a lover of God ? Awake, awake to the work, O my heart ! Enquire, examine, and take a strict account how are thy passionate powers employed. Go over thy various affections, and enquire of all of them, how stands thy love to God ?

"Admiration is described as the first of the passions : It arises on the notice of something new, or rare and uncommon : But it never ceases nor is lost in the contemplation of God, whose glories are infinite, and in whom the holy soul always finds something new and wondrous. He is a rare and uncommon object indeed, for there is but one such being in heaven and earth ; there never was but one from all eternal ages past, nor ever will be but one to all future eternal ages.

"Hast thou seen him, my soul, so as to love him ? then thy work of pleasing contemplation and wonder will be still renewed : Among creatures we go on to admire what we love, but the love of the

Creator will lead us to everlasting admiration. And if thou lovest him, thou wilt ever find something new and wondrous in him, as thy knowledge of him increases. Ask thyself, then, hast thou seen the glories and the graces of thy God, so as to wonder at the infinite variety of his wisdom, the greatness of his majesty, and the condescensions of his mercy? Are his displays of glory in nature and providence, in the Bible and in the church, and especially in his beloved Son Jesus, the matter of thy joyful meditation and high esteem? Does a sense of his transcendent grandeur and goodness strike thee, as it becomes a creature to be stricken with the ideas of a God, that is, with a holy veneration and with an awful delight? The love of so sublime and infinite a Being is naturally turned to pleasing adoration, and becomes an act of noble worship: But when earthly lovers adore their meaner objects, to express the strength of their love, they turn idolaters, and affront God their Maker. Remember, O my soul, God alone must be adored.

“But proceed now, and ask, how stand thy desires and wishes? Is the favor, the presence, and the enjoyment of God, the object of thy strongest desires, and of thy constant pursuit? Dost thou long after a sense of the pardon of sin, the love of God, and a preparation to dwell for ever with him, above all things besides? Yet further inquire, what is thy heart’s chief delight: Are those the sweetest seasons of life, when thou art brought nearest to God in the temper of thy spirit, in the lively hope of his love, and in humble converse with him? Are the secret hours of retirement dear and delightful to thee, above all human society? Are the workings of thy heart, in warm and affectionate devotion, thy sweetest pleasures? Can it be that ever I should love God supremely, and yet not find my converse with him to be my supreme joy?

“Again: Are the things that relate to God and eternity the objects of my choice and love, above and beyond the things that relate to men and this life? What value hast thou, O my soul, for the Bible, the book of God? His words will be treasured up in the heart, and will become the sweet entertainment of thy solitary hours, if God himself has the highest room in thy affections. Let me enquire again, how stand my desires toward the sanctuary, toward the places and seasons of divine worship? “Am *I* glad when they *say unto me*, *Come, let us go up to the house of God?*” Psalm exxii. 1. Are the courts of Zion my delight, because the blessed God manifests his power and glory there? Do I love the saints of God? Is the company of lively Christians refreshing and entertaining to me, above all the idle discourse of the world, or the vain merriments or more polite amusements of the age? Do I

look upon the children of God with a peculiar respect, with an eye of distinguishing love, and that for this reason, because they stand related to God, and bear his image? Do I feel a sympathy with them in their sorrows? Do I pity and relieve from my very heart the poor in this world, who are the sons and daughters of the most high God? And is Jesus the supreme Son of God, the highest in my esteem, and the dearest to my heart?

"Ask yet again, O my soul; is every thing little and contemptible in thy eyes, in comparison of the things of God? Can any thing fill up the room and place of God? Or canst thou say all things are emptiness and vanity where God is not? When St. Austin, who was exceeding fond of the writings of Cicero, the Roman orator, came to taste the pleasures of religion, by the knowledge of Christ, the writings even of Cicero lost their relish with him, because he found not Christ there. How stands it now with thee, in respect of some of thy dearest delights of nature? Are they all placed, as they ought to be, in thy esteem, infinitely below God? Are thy best earthly joys empty and unsatisfying without God? Canst thou say, in the language of the apostle, and assume his triumph, *Yea doubtless, and I count all things but loss for the excellency of the knowledge of Christ Jesus*, by whom we are brought near to God the Father? *Phil. iii. 8.*

"Enquire yet again, does thy love to God awaken and employ thy zeal and holy activity for his honor? Art thou solicitous to keep all his commandments, and hereby manifest thy love? There is no evidence of the love of God can be sufficient or sincere, if this be wanting. Dost thou seek to grow more and more like to God? Dost thou breathe earnestly after greater conformity to Jesus, the first and the brightest image of the Father? Is it a pain to thee to find thyself so unlike him, whom thou lovest supremely? Love will create likeness.

"Let us examine thee now, my heart, how stand thy uneasy and painful affections? Hast thou a rooted hatred of every sin? Hast thou an inward aversion to every thing that displeases God? Dost thou look back on thy own former transgressions with holy shame and sincere sorrow? Art thou covered with an inward blush at the recollection of thy past follies? Are thy sins thy heaviest burden, and thy most uneasy load? Has thy sincere and unfeigned repentance been manifested by all the proper passions that attend a penitent, by self-abasement and inward confusion, by mourning in secret, and a holy displicency and resentment against thyself and thy folly? And is it a grief and pain to thee, to see and hear others transgress against thy God, and affront his law and his love?

"Seek yet further: Hast thou a watchful jealousy over thyself, lest thou wander from God? A constant solicitude of mind, lest thou offend and displease him whom thou lovest supremely? Dost thou stand afar off from every temptation, as one afraid to be defiled with sin, and dishonor thy God? Art thou cautious of that company, of that business, of that diversion or delight which has before ensnared thee, and broke thy holy intercourse with God?

"Ask again, O my heart, hast thou subdued thy uneasy passions of anger, frowardness, and resentment, against God and against man, by the overcoming influence of divine love? Hast thou a submissive and humble carriage under hard providences and sore disappointments from the hand of God? Dost thou love him so well, as not to murmur at his holy conduct, nor quarrel with his government? And hast thou acquired the sacred power and skill of suppressing thy wrath and revenge against men, by the constraining influence of the love of God? Dost thou forbear and forgive those who offend thee, from a sweet sense of the forbearing and forgiving love of God towards thee? If thy love to God has yet done little of this service, if it has not begun to make thee meek and mild, and dispassionate under afflictions from the hand of God, or the affronts of men, it has not acquired any great prevalence in thee, and there is too much reason to suspect the sincerity of it.

"Come yet further, O my soul, take a step forward, and look towards death and eternity. Art thou willing to cross the dark valley, in order to dwell with thy beloved? I grant nature has its frailties and fears; I grant also, that the want of assurance of salvation damps the wings of the soul, which would be stretched forward to the enjoyment of God in the heavenly country: I would put the question therefore in a gentle and favorable manner: Hast thou any desire to leave this sinful world, to quit all thy dearest hopes and interests here, for the sake of dwelling with God on high? Suppose thou hadst a steady hope of his love, and the pains of death were mitigated, hast thou an inward breathing and tendency towards the happiness that arises from the presence of God? O blessed souls, whose love is risen to so transcendent a degree, that they are not afraid even of the sharpest pangs, and the terrors of death! They can venture with pleasure to cross *the swellings of Jordan*, that they may enter into the promised land, and dwell in the city of their God.

"What is it, O my heart, what is it in the word hell that strikes thee with so much horror? Is it the thought of an endless separation from thy God? What is it that makes the name of heaven carry so pleasing a sound? Is it because thy God dwells there in

his fairest glory, and in his richest grace? The mere dread of hell as a place of sorrow and pain, and the desire of heaven as a mere state of rest from trouble, and of some sort of unknown happiness, are no manner of evidences of any love to God, much less of a supreme love, such as God requires. The passions of nature may be awakened by natural self-love at the views of heaven and hell, when set merely in this light: But it is the hope of being *for ever with the Lord*, that is the chief allurement of heaven in the eye of the sacred lover; and it is the eternal absence of God gives hell its blackest colors, and its most formidable appearances.

"Hast thou, O my soul, run over all thy passions in this enquiry? and what is the result of thy labor? Canst thou stand this test? Art thou a lover of God with all thy heart? If thou find this divine principle, this sovereign and holy affection reigning within thee, bless the distinguishing grace of God, who has kindled this heavenly flame, and cherish it with perpetual care. Set a guard upon every affection, lest it wander from its duty. O may divine love maintain its rightful dominion, and universal sovereignty in my soul. Let me keep God always near me, and watch against the seducing influence of tempting creatures, that I may ever preserve the love of God in its supreme fervency, and its unrivalled influences: Then my whole nature, with all its powers, shall be thine, O my God, for ever and ever." *Amen.*

## DISCOURSE III.

### THE USE OF THE PASSIONS IN RELIGION.

WE have seen already what is included in “loving God with the heart, and how this divine love will influence all the other affections into a suitable and correspondent exercise.” We proceed now to the third general head of discourse, and that is, to shew the use of the passions in religion, or what advantage may be obtained by them, or expected from them in the Christian life: And here we shall find the advantages of them so great and numerous, as will render it necessary for every one who professes serious religion, to have the affections of his soul engaged in it.

Advantage I. “The passions being duly awakened, will set the powers of the understanding at work, in the search of divine truth and religious duty, and render the knowledge of God exceeding desirable to sinful men.” We are by nature thoughtless of God and divine things: A little, a very little general knowledge of religion satisfies our desires, because we imagine it is sufficient for our necessities. The bulk of mankind have their passions touched with earthly things, and they are ever enquiring who will shew us where corn and wine, the pleasures of sense, the possessions of this world, honors or preferments, are to be gotten? Too many are ready to join with the profane wretches, who are described in *Job* xxi. 14. *They say unto God, depart from us, we desire not the knowledge of thy ways;* we do not want to know much of God, nor what is our duty to him.

But when the arrows of conviction strike through the soul, when the heart is awakened to a pathetic sense of sin, and the fear of divine vengeance possesses and torments the spirit, then it is the most importunate enquiry of the heart and the lips, *What shall we do to be saved?* Acts xvi. 30. How shall we escape the wrath to come? How is the governing justice of the great God to be satisfied for our offences? What is the way to be made partakers of his pardoning mercy? *Wherewith shall I appear before the Lord, and in what manner shall I bow myself,* and worship the *Most High God?* Micah vi. 6. This was the language of the awakened jailer, who had just before scourged the saints of the Lord, the holy apostles;

*Acts* xvi. 30. This was the earnest cry of the crucifiers of Christ himself, at St. Peter's sermon, when *they were pricked to their heart*; *Acts* ii. 37. This is the language of nature convinced of sin, and the danger of divine indignation. St. Paul learned all the terrors of the Lord, and felt all his painful passions in an uproar, when he was struck down to the dust, with the dreadful and overwhelming glory in his way to Damascus; *Acts* ix. 3. And with what intense and hasty zeal did he make this enquiry, *Lord, what wilt thou have me to do?* verse 6. And when he had learned the knowledge of Christ, as the only way to the favor of God and salvation, how highly doth he value it! *Phil.* iii. 8. *Yea, doubtless, and I count all things but loss, for the excellency of the knowledge of Christ Jesus, my Lord.*

If I am awakened to a sense of sin, and fear the anger of God, I shall long to know the awful extent of his power, and the terrible effects of his anger, as well as the methods of obtaining his grace. If I love him, I shall spend many pleasant hours of enquiry into his amiable excellencies. Each pious passion will promote its peculiar enquiries. Fear and love will wander with holy awe and delight among his glories, and be ever pursuing further knowledge of his perfections; If I love God with warm and devout affection, I shall rejoice daily to find new discoveries of his unsearchable wisdom, his all-sufficient power, his immense goodness, and the unbounded riches of his grace: I shall trace his wondrous footsteps through this beautiful creation, and endeavor to find his way in the tract of daily providences: I shall survey him and his attributes in his book of grace, and dwell upon his divine features in Jesus the *image*, and the *brightness of his glory*; *Heb.* i. 3, and I shall search further continually into the knowledge of Christ, who is *God manifest in the flesh*: I shall dig in the mines of Scripture for treasures of divine knowledge, and never grow weary of the work. I shall be always enquiring, "What I shall do to please and serve him," who is the object of my highest love; and how I shall obtain stronger sensations and assurances of his favor, and dwell for ever in his presence, who is the life and the joy of my soul. We long still to know more of this transcendent Being whom we love: It is this divine passion that animates these enquiries after the knowledge of God; and this shall render them infinite and everlasting, because God the object of them is everlasting and infinite.

II. "The affections being once engaged, will keep the soul fixed to divine things. The sense of them is impressed deeper on the mind, by the exercise of devout passions, and it will abide there much longer." Even where reason is bright, and the judgment

clear, yet it will be ineffectual for any valuable purposes, if religion reach no farther than the head, and proceed not to the heart : It will have but little influence, if there are none of the affections engaged. Notions of religion in the understanding, without any touch upon the passions, have been compared to the stars in a winter midnight, bright and shining, but very cold ; or rather to the meteor which is called a shooting-star, which vanishes quickly, and is lost in darkness.

Suppose we are convinced by calm reasoning of the being of a God, of the duties which we owe our Creator, of his government of the world, and of his final judgment ; suppose we are led into a demonstration or evident proof, that we are guilty creatures, having broken the laws of God, and that there is no salvation for us, but in and by a Mediator ; suppose we are really convinced in our judgment, that there is a heaven or a hell that awaits our departure from this world ; that we must die shortly, and that we are for ever miserable without pardoning mercy, and sanctifying grace ; all this is valuable in its kind, and is necessary in order to salvation : But if all this knowledge make no impression on the affections, it is not likely to abide with us, nor to do us much good : Knowledge wears off the mind, if never used. Cold, unaffectioning notions, will have no powerful influence to reform our lives. Every new scene of business or pleasure brushes off these thoughts of religion from our souls, where they have not been let into the heart, nor possessed the passions : They vanish like *the morning dew, or like an early cloud that passes away* ; Hosea vi. 4.

It is one great end and design of the passions, to fix the attention strongly upon the objects of them, to settle the thoughts with such intenseness and continuance on that which raises them, that they are not easily shaken off. What we fear or desire, what we love and hope for, what we lament or rejoice in, will seize and busy our minds, and take them up perpetually, notwithstanding the importunities of other businesses or cares : The passions are supremely importunate, and will be heard. Now if the passions are strongly engaged for God, the world will have little power to call off the heart from religion.

Suppose two preachers were desired to minister to the same auditory, on a day of fasting or praise, and on the same subject too. One of them has all the beauty, force, and skill of clear and calm reasoning ; the other not only instructs well, but powerfully moves the affections with sacred oratory : Which of these two will best secure the attention of the people, and guard them from drowsiness or wandering ? Surely he that touches the heart will fix the eyes

and the ears and all the powers ; while he that merely endeavors to inform the head, will find many wandering eyes, and some sleepers.

Suppose two persons have heard the same discourse from the pulpit, which was both rational and pathetic. One of them is pleased with the fine reasoning of the preacher, and hath his judgment convinced of the necessity and importance of the duty which he is exhorted to practice, and goes no further ; the other hath also felt the very same conviction of his understanding by force of argument, and at the same time finds his soul touched inwardly with an emotion of the lively passions ; he is awakened and surprised with an awful concern about his past neglects, and a holy fear of divine anger ; he is struck to the heart with sentiments of piety ; he is grieved and ashamed at his folly, he is filled with zeal and holy purposes : Pray which of these two will have the discourse dwell most upon their hearts ; which is like to remember this sermon longest, and which is most likely to put it in practice ? This leads me to the third particular.

III. "All the duties of holiness are rendered much easier, and temptations to sin much weaker, when religion hath taken hold of the heart, and the passions of the soul are engaged in it." Passion animates all the inferior powers of nature, and strengthens them all in their operation. It is a sort of life and fire within the hearts of men, which God the Creator hath ordained to be ever ready there, to give force and spirit for present action. He knew our nature wanted this spur, this inward spring of activity.

Suppose we had been left merely to the exercise of our reason and judgment, to inform us when it was proper to eat and drink, without having any such appetites as thirst and hunger : It is possible indeed that life might have been maintained, but we should have been often ready to neglect the proper seasons of food, and nature would have been supported but in a feeble and languishing manner, without such regular and constant nourishment as we want, and that too without any sensible delight. But the keen appetites of hunger and thirst are implanted in our very natures, to awaken us to take our solid and liquid food, and that with constancy and natural pleasure. It is for the same end, that all the passions were wrought into our constitution by our great Creator, that we might have some more vigorous principles than the mere power of reasoning, to animate us to activity on all just and proper occasions.

Suppose I were told that my house was a-fire at midnight, and my cold reason informed me, that in a little time I and my goods might be consumed, it is probable I should think of using some

method to save myself: But the passion of surprise and fear exerts itself in a moment, and hurries me out to make an immediate escape. Fear was wrought into human nature for such purposes as these. In such a fright we can almost move mountains, and perform wonders, to the utmost limits of the strength of man, in order to save ourselves or our dear relatives from the flames. Cold reasoning without passion, would have no such sovereign and powerful effects.

Thus it is in things of religion. A cold information that misery will be the consequent of sin, or even a rational conviction of the distant danger of hell, without the passion of fear, would never animate a man to cry out with such importunate enquiries, "What shall I do to escape *everlasting burnings?*" It is this passion of fear that constrains him to fly for his life to *the hope that is set before him in the gospel*, and to make his escape as Lot did from Sodom, without *looking back* on the allurements of sin.

I might give instances of the like kind in the affection of divine love. I may learn by reason that God is to be honored and obeyed, because he is my Creator and my Lord: I may be convinced of the beauty of virtue, and the excellency of religion, and that all the precepts of it are reasonable; yet these precepts will carry but a feeble sway with them, and have a very imperfect influence on my practice, in opposition to all my carnal interests and corrupt inclinations, if I have nothing to move me but the mere use of my reason, telling me it is a proper thing to obey the great God. This will not do the work, if I have no affectionate love to God as a Father and a Saviour. It is a knowledge and belief of the truth of the gospel, joined with love to Christ my Redeemer, that makes me zealous to fulfil every duty. Christianity itself is thus excellently described by the apostle; it is *faith working by love*; Gal. v. 6. A mere knowledge of any person will not make us grow like him, but love hath an assimilating and transforming power: The divine affection of love will work perpetually within us, and never cease till it has made us like our beloved object, till it has made us holy as God is holy, and formed heaven within us.

And when this warm love to God our Maker, and to Jesus our Saviour, is joined to a lively hope of everlasting happiness, how do these united passions invigorate the soul in duty, and bear down all temptations before them? Great is the constraining power of these divine affections, hope and love: They break through all obstacles that stand in the way of salvation: When they are united together they arise to holy joy; and among the saints of the Old Testament, as well as the New, *the joy of the Lord was their*

strength to fulfil all the duties of religion and righteousness; *Nehem.* viii. 10. This sacred temper of mind carried out the patriarchs of old, and the heroes of the ancient church, to obey the call of God with courage, to leave their own native country and their friends, to wander through the earth as *strangers and pilgrims*, and to live upon a naked promise: This taught Moses to esteem the *reproach of Christ*, and the hope of the Messiah, *greater riches than all the treasures of Egypt*: This enabled the pious Jews to work wonders of righteousness, to venture into the dens of lions, to dare the edge of the sword, and combat the violence of fire; to endure the trial of cruel mockings and scourgings, to pass through showers of stones, and engines of torture, despising death in its most frightful forms, and *not accepting deliverance*. These are the wonders which are ascribed to faith in the eleventh chapter to the *Hebrews*: But it was faith animated by divine love; it was faith rising high in the hope of a *better resurrection*. A naked and simple belief of things unseen would scarce have wrought these amazing effects in human nature, without some warm and joyful efforts of the affections of hope and love.

Behold the hero of the gospel, St. Paul, that little contemptible figure of a man bearing down all opposition before him in his sacred course of zeal and duty. Under this influence he can triumph over all the formidable things of nature, and the terrors of this world; *Rom.* viii. 35. *Who shall separate us from the love of Christ?* Who shall divide our hearts from him? Who shall make us weary of his service, or tempt us away from the faith and obedience of his gospel? *Shall tribulation, shall distress, shall persecution, shall famine or nakedness, or peril or sword?* As it was written of the saints in former ages, so shall it be fulfilled again in our age, *for thy sake we can bear killing all the day long*; the sheep of Christ can stand the axe, or the knife of slaughter: *In all these things we are more than conquerors, through the grace of Christ that hath loved us.* Every holy martyr hath made it appear, *that love is stronger than prisons, or death:* It hath its flames that are superior to common fire, and can overcome all the terrors of men.

When this divine love and hope have possessed the spirit, what poor and paltry things are all the allurements of flesh and sense? How feeble and insufficient are all the gay and glittering appearances of nature in this world, all the flatteries of pride and sensuality, to draw the heart away from God? The holy soul can boldly withstand all the enticements of sin, when divine grace hath seized the affections, and got possession of those sprightly and active powers.

What the nerves and spirits are to animal nature, the same thing are the passions to the soul : They are its very nerves and spirits, its most vigorous and unwearied springs of action, both in the zealous discharge of every duty, and the firm resistance of every temptation to sin. These active springs set all nature at work in the affairs of grace.

The sanctified affections are so great a part of the new creature, that the very graces of the Holy Spirit are called by their names. What is divine love, religious fear, and heavenly hope ? What is a sacred contempt and disdain of sensual vanities, and an immortal aversion to sin, and utter abhorrence of it ? What are holy desires, penitent sorrows, and spiritual joys ? What is all this blessed catalogue of the fruits of the Spirit, but the passions of nature refined and renewed by grace.

It is the influence of religion on the passions, that doth in a great measure make the difference between the true Christian and the mere outward professor : The mere professor may know as much of the doctrines of religion, and of the duties of it, as the most religious man ; but he doth not fear and love, and desire and hope, and mourn and rejoice, as the true Christian doth. If a bare rational knowledge of divine things were sufficient to make a true disciple of Christ, the greatest student in divinity, and especially the sharpest critic in Scripture, would be the best Christian : But it is not always found so ; critics and students, rich in knowledge, may have cold hearts, and lie dead in a state of sin.

IV. "The practices of religion are not only rendered easy, by having the affections employed in it, but they become pleasant and delightful, and every sin is more painful to the soul where the passions are engaged for God." If the Christian be employed in holy meditation, how does the soul that loves God travel with delight over the various scenes of his glory, in the lower and the upper worlds ! How does he dwell upon the majesty and the mercy of his heavenly Father ; upon the excellencies of Christ the Saviour, upon his offices and his dignities from day to day ! How pleasurable doth the mind diffuse itself in contemplation upon his pre-existent state, when he dwelt in the Father's bosom ; his condescending incarnation and coming into flesh and blood, the labors and sorrows of his life, the anguish and amazing love of his death, the glory of his resurrection, the honors paid him at his ascent to the throne of God in heaven, the efficacy of his intercession, and the joyful and dreadful appearance of the great Judge, when he shall come in the clouds of heaven *to be admired of his saints*, and to give vengeance and destruction to those who have ridiculed and rejected the gospel

of his grace? How are the thoughts fixed on the sacred theme, without an inclination to rove and go astray? How are the powers of imagination devoutly employed, when the holy passions are roused into activity, when our fear, our hope, our love, our joy, are all in happy exercise? But if these are absent, and we are left merely to rational enforcements of duty on the mind, without love or affection in the heart, with what a cold indifference do we set about the work! How fluttering are our thoughts! How wandering are our hearts! And every flying fancy calls us away, and scatters our powers among a thousand vanities.

I might instance in the duty of prayer or praise, when the love of the heart flames out into holy desires, how ready and eager is the soul to seek the Lord! Not the shadows and silence of the midnight, not the early business and cares of the morning, can withhold the good man from calling upon his God? *With my soul have I desired thee in the night, with my spirit within me will I seek thee early;* Isaiah xxvi. 9. and *I prevented the dawning of the morning,* and cried to the Lord; *Psalm cxix. 147.* Or if the heart be warmed with a sense of divine mercy, and kindled into religious joy, how gloriously does the tongue break forth into praises! *Bless the Lord, O my soul! and all that is within me bless his holy name:* *Bless the Lord, O my soul, and forget not all his benefits:* Psalm ciii. 1, 2. *Seven times a-day will I praise thee: My heart is fixed, O God, my heart is fixed: I will sing and give praise: Awake, my tongue, my glory, awake to the joyful work;* *Psalm lvii. 7, 8.*

While the pious affections are duly engaged in prayer, even a common Christian is enabled to make divine work of it: Our minds never want matter, nor our tongues expression. Sense and language are very much at the call of the devout passions, where the mind is tolerably furnished with the principles of religion; and then the soul converses with its Maker with unknown delight. But when we are impelled by a mere precept, commanding us to our knees, and conscience goads us on as it were to the task and drudgery of prayer, without any devout affection, how cold is the heart! How languid the worship! How dry the mind! How scanty the language! The invention and the lips strive and labor, and all to little purpose. In such a case, I cannot but think that well-composed forms of devotion may be useful helps to awaken the drowsy powers, and to call up sleeping religion. But where these powers are awake and lively, such helps are less needful in our praying seasons.

The same experiment may be repeated in reading the word of God. How full of sweetness and holy pleasure are the discoveries

and the promises of the Bible, when devout affections are at work ! How sweet are the histories of Abraham and David, the prophecies of Isaiah, and the predictions that point to Christ ! How glorious the epistles of Peter and Paul ! How divinely pleasing is the gospel of John, and the dying discourses and prayer of our Saviour in the xiv. xv. xvi. and xvii. chapters of this evangelist ! How full of rapture and holy transport are the Psalms of David ! We enter into his spirit, and we feel his divine sentiments and joys. But what a deadness, what a dryness overspreads even the most delicious and heavenly parts of those divine writings ; what an insipid and tasteless thing is the gospel itself, when the holy passions are all asleep ! So it is in hearing sermons : When our sacred affections are awake, we dwell on the lips of the minister, as on the lips of an angel of God : Every sentence seems to come from heaven ; and even a feeble teacher, with all his infirmities, at such a season seems like a divine messenger, and raises your attention and delight. But the cause is within yourselves, the activity of your devout affections under the influence of divine grace.

Is not benevolence and kindness to our fellow-creatures, liberality to the poor, and especially to our fellow-Christians, another part of our religion ? *Pure religion and undefiled—is this, to visit the fatherless and the widow in their affliction ; James i. 27. He that loves God must love his brother also ; 1 John iv. 21.* But how can we fulfil the several duties of help and relief, defence and consolation to our brethren, if we do not indulge the warm and tender affections of pity, and sympathy, and love ? The bounty of the hands, even to the most distressed object, will be but scanty and small, if there be no compassion in the heart : But when we love our brethren for God's sake, and excite in our hearts all the friendly and compassionate affections towards the poor and the miserable, then covetousness and self-love lie down vanquished, and have no power to withhold the hand from a liberal distribution of blessings to those that are in need. Compassion melts the heart, and makes the hands flow with bounty and relief.

I might give other instances also of the same happy effect of holy passions, in the more difficult duties of religion, in mortification of most beloved sins, as well as in denying our most darling interests for the sake of Christ. "How sweet is it," saith St. Austin, "under the power of divine love, how sweet is it to abstain from all the old, sweet, and sinful delights of the flesh !" *Herein is our love to God manifested, that we keep his commandments ; and none of his commands are grievous ; 1 John v. 3.*

And as the duties of religion are fulfilled with unusual delight, so

every sin becomes more painful to the heart, when the passions are divinely tintured. The very dwelling of sinful principles in the heart, the working of unruly appetites and unholy inclinations, and the first motions of pride, and wantonness, and malice, and envy, and love of the world, are all grievous to a soul whose affections are renewed and sanctified. Every compliance with temptation breaks in upon the sweet serenity and peace of the spirit, and gives it great disquietude. Read the case of the holy Psalmist and of St. Peter, after their folly. Thus it is in some measure with every sincere and lively Christian; nor is the spirit ever at rest after any remarkable sin, till that sin hath been made bitter to the soul, and till the soul has made fresh and warm application to the throne of grace, by humble repentance and faith in the blood of sprinkling.

It is a known doctrine, both in the Jewish and Christian church, that not only the pleasant, but the painful and uneasy passions of the heart are consecrated to divine purposes. Sorrow for sin, and deep mourning, teach us powerfully that *it is an evil and bitter thing* to forsake the Lord our God; and in this manner *our wickedness* is appointed to *correct us*, and our backslidings to reprove us; *Jer. ii. 19*. By grief of the soul, and *by the sadness of the countenance* arising from it, Solomon tells us, *the heart is made better*; *Eccles. vii. 3*. When holy David began to be *sorry for his sin*, when he *watered his couch with his tears*, when his *eye was consumed with grief*, and he *roared by reason of the disquietness of his heart*, *Psalm vi. 3, 6, 7*, he was then under the workings of recovering grace. When St. Paul's first epistle to the Corinthians *made them sorry* for their connivance at the incestuous iniquity of one of their members, he tells them in his second letter, how necessary this sorrow was, this *godly sorrow, which worketh repentance unto salvation*. What a train of holy passions attend it!

*What indignation against sin, and the sinner! What holy fear of defilement by communion with such a crime, or the indulgence of it! What vehement desire after cleansing and forgiving grace! What revenge against such foul iniquity! What zeal to approve themselves clear before God and man!* *2 Cor. vii. 9, 10, 11.*

The blessed God *does not willingly afflict and grieve the children of men*; *Lam. iii. 33*, and he would not have made the sorrows and the bitter groans of repentance so necessary a part of the Christian life, had he not known the painful passions of nature to have so happy an influence in the kingdom of his grace. By this anguish of the conscience, by these afflictions of the spirit, God carries on his own designs of mercy, and makes the soul *partaker of his holiness*; *Heb. xii. 10*.

V. "To employ the passions for God, is to take a most powerful engine of mischief out of the hand of sin and Satan, and to reduce it to the obedience of Christ." It is the recovery of a considerable part of human nature out of dismal captivity and bondage. The passions are the warmest and strongest powers of the soul: They are the artillery whereby man wages war either for or against heaven. The passions by nature are devoted to the service of sin, and engaged on the devil's side in his wars against the Almighty, and they are charged with the seeds of impious fire and thunder: But when divine grace hath taken hold of them, and employed them on the side of God and religion, it is like seizing the cannon of the enemy from their old batteries, and planting them in new bulwarks, to make war upon the devil and all his army.

Fearful and impious work do the passions make, when they are engaged on the side of the flesh, the world, and the devil. What bold contempt of God, and all that is holy! What unruly violence of love to vanity and sensual pleasure! What mad delight in sin! What impetuous desires of forbidden objects! What malice boils in the heart against our neighbor, upon every supposed injury! What wicked envy frets and rages in the soul at the welfare of others! What wrath, and indignation, and revenge, are continually ready to be in arms! And how do these hellish passions employ the tongue in slander and lies, and sometimes imbrue the hands in mischief and blood! Now what a glorious victory is it to have the vicious affections entirely subdued, and the other powers of nature, which had been usurped by hell, seized and retained, and consecrated to the God of heaven, and become instruments of holiness and peace! To have these engines of iniquity become happy mediums of adoration and service to God, and hourly benefits to men! O blessed and divine change! O the sovereign power of converting grace!

VI. "I might add in the next place, that when the passions are sanctified and formed to a divine temper, it gives the gospel of Christ credit and honor in the world, in that it can triumph over the strongest powers of corrupt nature, and subdue them to the service of God and religion." With what wicked violence were the passions of Paul engaged against the cause of Christianity, when, to use his own expressions, *he was exceedingly mad against the saints, compelled them to blaspheme, and persecuted them to strange cities;* Acts xxvi. 11. When he *breathed out threatenings and slaughter* against the disciples of the Lord; *Acts ix. 1.* Now to have this man changed from a lion to a lamb, from a persecutor to a preacher of the gospel; to hear this man propagating that

gospel with zeal, which he so lately endeavored to destroy with fury, what divine honors this event gave to the religion of Christ, when it was but young in the world ? And as there were multitudes of such instances in those primitive days, so I hope they are not utterly wanting now.

There are, I hope, in our age, in this city, and even in this assembly, some Christians that can bear sacred witness to the divine power of the gospel in this respect. One can say, "how fond was I of vanity and sensual pleasure ! Regardless of God, and thoughtless of religion, with an aversion to all that was virtuous and holy. But, through the grace of God, the object of my love is changed ; I delight now in the things of God ; I love his word, his people, himself, and his Christ, above all things in the world !"

Another can say, "I was greedy of money, and ambitious of vain-glory." Another confesses, "I was fretful and quarrelsome ; I was malicious and envious ; I was wrathful and resenting ; and my ungodly passions were ever ready to rise and ferment against my fellow-creatures : But now, through the influence of grace, I find my chief ambition is to be a child of God, and to exceed others in holiness : I covet the riches of grace, and the benefits of the gospel, above all other treasures : Now I am angry at myself because of sin, and angry at sinners when they dishonor God and my Saviour ; I love my Lord Jesus, who hath procured forgiveness for me ; and I would love all men, and forgive them for Jesus' sake."

It is a public glory brought to the gospel of Christ, when our devout and pious passions surmount all the carnal affections of the heart ; when the fear of God rises so high, and grows so strong in the soul, as to subdue and overcome all other fears : And if we fear God sincerely, we need fear nothing else. It is very honorable to Christ and his religion, when the love of God and of Jesus Christ, the Saviour, flames high above all other loves, and makes us forego and forget every thing which might be dear and valuable to us before, if it stands in competition with God, the supreme object of our love. When the Christian can rejoice, and say, "I love my father and my mother, my wife and children, with as true and tender an affection as ever I did ; but I love God and my Redeemer with a more sublime passion. Neither father nor mother, nor dear young children, nor the wife of the bosom, shall withhold me from my duty to God ; and, through the aids of divine grace, I would be ready to offer myself, with all my interest in them, as a sacrifice to the love of Christ."

It is glorious indeed to see the devout passions so much tran-

scend all other passions and appetites, all other fears, loves, and desires, as that they all melt away and vanish before the power of divine fear and divine love. To see all our fondest desires, and our warmest passions for creatures languish and sink, and die under the present influences of devout affection, as the light of a candle vanishes and is lost in the midst of sunbeams, or as the noise of a shaking leaf dies and is unheard in the midst of thunder: O happy souls, who have arrived at this sublime degree of Christianity! Thither let our hearts aspire daily, and never cease our holy labors and prayers till we love, till we fear, till we desire God in this glorious and intense degree.

VII. In the last place, I add, "the sanctified passions render us so much the more conformable to the blessed Jesus, and fitter for his presence and enjoyment in heaven." As the Son of God put on our flesh and blood, so he assumed the various powers and properties of human nature, the appetites and passions of mankind: He endured hunger and thirst, he had fear and love, hope and joy; nor were the more troublesome affections of anger and sorrow left out of his constitution, but they were all innocent and holy; they were never tainted with sin as ours are; they had no corrupt mixtures to defile his soul. Our passions are like water with mud at the bottom; when they are moved, they too frequently raise the mud, and betray their impurity: But the passions of Christ were ever pure; like water from the clearest fountain in a glass of crystal, which, though it be never so much agitated, is still unpolluted.

These pathetic powers of his holy soul were ever engaged in the interest of religion, and employed for pious purposes. He loved God his Father with the most perfect and intense affection; and he let the world know that he loved the Father; *John xiv. 31.* He rejoiced in spirit, when he gave thanks to God; *Luke x. 21,* and when God hid his face from him, and forsook him, *his soul was exceeding sorrowful even unto death;* *Matt. xxvi. 38.* He was grieved and angry with the hypocrites and blasphemers of his day, and looked round upon them with wrath and holy indignation; *Mark iii. 5.* How pathetic and vehement was his zeal for his Father's honor, when he scourged out the buyers and sellers from the temple? *The zeal of the house of God consumed* and wasted his spirits, as it is said; *John ii. 17.* He loved his church with most astonishing fervor, for his love was stronger than death; *Eph. iv. 25.* *And greater love hath no man than this, that one should lay down his life for another;* *John xv. 13.* How passionately did he mourn at his own foresight of the dismal distress of his enemies at Jerusalem! "He looked upon the bloody city with tender compas-

sion, *and wept over it*, with the tears of grief and love;" *Luke xix.* 41. And what divine passions were exercised in his devout retirements, what holy fervors in the wilderness and upon midnight mountains, is only known to God, and to ministering angels.

Thus it appears, that the more our affections are tinctured with piety and goodness, and the warmer is their engagement in the things of God, the more nearly shall we imitate our glorious Redeemer. O divine pattern, beyond all our imitation! But blessed are those who are the nearest copiers of it.

But you will enquire, "How will this exercise of devout passion fit us the more for the heavenly world?" Angels are not clothed with flesh and blood as we are, and the spirits of the departed saints have left this part of their nature behind them in the grave. What efforts of passion, therefore, can there be among the inhabitants of heaven? To this I answer, that though spirits departed, and angels, can have no such ferments of animal nature, as go to make up those principles and powers, which we call the passions in this mortal state, yet there is something akin to them, which may be called affections in the very nature of every intelligent creature: Spirits which have no relation to flesh can fear and hope, can love and desire, can rejoice and grieve, and that in strong and intense degrees; otherwise there would be no hell for the separate souls of the wicked, and for the punishment of devils; nor would there be a heaven for the reward of *the spirits of just men made perfect*: There cannot be a heaven without pleasure, nor a hell without grief and anguish: Since therefore there is, and must be something of pure affection in separate spirits that bears a correspondence with our passions in this mortal state, we may be well assured, that the more these passions are refined and sanctified, and the more they are engaged about divine objects, in a proper manner, according to the will of God, we shall thereby acquire a greater meetness for the business and blessedness of heaven, and be better prepared for the exercise of those more spiritual affections which belong to the saints departed, and to the happy inhabitants of the intellectual world.

The holy apostle teaches us this doctrine in that sweet period of Scripture, *1 Pet. i. 3, 6, 8*, When we are *begotten again to a lively hope by the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead*, therein *we greatly rejoice*; and the joy surmounts all our present heaviness, and bears us in conquest and triumph through our *manifold temptations*: It gives us a transporting view of praise, honor, and glory, at the appearance of our Lord Jesus; *whom having not seen we love; in whom though now we see him not, yet be-*

lieving, we rejoice with joy unspeakable and full of glory ; or, as it is in the original, with unspeakable and glorified joy. You see here, that the three blessed affections of hope, love, and joy, bring the soul to the confines of the heavenly world, set him as it were at the gates of paradise, fill the heart with those divine sensations which are near akin to the joys of glorified spirits. Thus, by the exercise of the holy passions in a sublime degree, "we are come to the spirits of the just made perfect, and almost admitted into the glorious presence of Jesus, our adored Mediator ; *Heb. xii. 23, 24.* Let us awake, let us arise, let us shake ourselves out of the dust of this earth, and dress our souls in these beautiful garments : Let us long and breathe after these sacred sensations of refined pleasure, to which the church itself is too much a stranger in our degenerate times. These are fair emblems and sweet foretastes of those unknown "pleasures which flow from the right hand of God without ceasing, and run, like rivers, an everlasting course, through all the ages of eternity ;" *Psalm xvi. 13.*

MEDITATION. "How glad am I to find that not only my understanding and my will, but that all my passions may be made serviceable to God and religion, to my noblest designs, and my eternal interest ! I am sure some of them have had an unhappy influence to lead me astray from my God, and my duty, and I am greatly pleased to hear that they are capable of being reduced to the service of my Maker, and become instruments of holiness and peace. Descend, O divine Spirit, descend into my heart ! Take hold of these active and sprightly powers of my nature, and bind them to thy eternal service. Awaken my fear of the majesty and the justice of God, that I may seek earnestly what I shall do to please him, and how I may obtain his favor : And let my fear be constant and restless till my feet are led into the paths of salvation, and I feel the constraining power of divine love.

"Let my devout passions be ever awake and lively when I hear the things of God spoken, or when I read of the momentous concerns of religion, and a life to come. Then the sacred truths and duties of Christianity shall be impressed deep on my memory, and written there as with a pen of diamond, never to be blotted out. O may the warm passions melt my soul to tenderness, and make me susceptible of every holy impression ! May this heart of mine, this table of stone, be softened by devout affection, till all the necessary and important parts of religion are written there in lasting characters ! May my heart, O Lord, receive the stamp of thy gospel with all its sacred lineaments, till I am become a new creature, transformed into the image of the Son of God !

"How easy will all the duties of holiness become, and all my temptations to sin how weak and ineffectual, if the passionate powers of my nature are warmly engaged for God ! How delightful and pleasant shall I then find even the difficult practices of religion ! How hateful will every sin be in my eyes, and how painful to my heart, when divine love as a sovereign has taken possession of it, and set all the train of affections at work there in its own service ! No more shall I complain of weariness, or be tired of religious worship : I shall say in my heart no more, *when will the sabbath be over?* Nor cut short my prayers and meditations, to gratify the flesh, and obey its corrupt influence. If I am winged with holy passion, I shall climb over mountains of difficulty in my way to heaven, or remove hills of temptation that obstructed my course : Divine love, as well as faith, can remove mountains.

"O how happy shall I be when all my passions are sanctified ! They have been, and I mourn to speak it, they have been wretched engines of mischief in the hand of sin and Satan : They have defiled my soul shamefully ; they have broken the law of my God ; they have abused his grace and his gospel, dishonored my Saviour, and grieved his Holy Spirit. When shall these powers of my nature be rescued from their sinful slavery, and be devoted to purposes divine and heavenly ? O that my fear and my love, my anger and my desire, my grief and my joy, were all pointed to their proper objects, that they might never more break out in an unruly manner to dishonor God, or to awaken sharp anguish in my conscience ! I would watch, I would pray, I would labor, and wrestle day and night against the body of sin that dwells in me. O for the sovereign influence of almighty grace, to correct all the disorders of my soul, and to turn every passion of my nature into a principle of holiness ! Let the blessed gospel of Christ obtain this triumph over me : Let the gospel subdue these rebellious powers to the obedience of my Lord and Saviour : May the gospel have the glory of so divine a change !

"Come, blessed Saviour, set thy holy example before me, in a more illustrious and transforming light : Let all the devout passions of zeal and love, which reigned in thy heart, reign also in mine : O that I might copy out the wonders of thy zeal for the honor of God, and thy love to the race of man ! With what a divine vehemence were thy holy affections engaged in worship ! But alas, how cold are all my attempts of devotion ! Kindle, O Jesus, the sacred fire within me : Let it melt down my heart, and mould me into thy likeness. Let my soul be made up of divine love, as a happy preparative for the joys of heaven, and the everlasting presence of God, and my Saviour." Amen.

## DISCOURSE IV.

### INFERENCES FROM THE USEFULNESS OF THE PASSIONS.

THE last discourse has informed us, that the Passions are not useless things, even in the important affairs of religion and godliness. We have seen how many and glorious are the advantages that we may derive from the right use of the affections in the Christian life. Let us not suffer so momentous a theme to pass away, without drawing some inferences or remarks from it.

Remark I. May the passions of our nature be made so serviceable to the interests of our religion, then “surely the doctrine of the stoics is a very unreasonable opinion, for it teaches us to suppress all our passions entirely, and, if possible, to root them out of our natures.” It is evident from what we have heard, that our pursuit of the important things of religion, in this present state, would be very faint and cold, and feeble, if it were not animated by some of these vigorous principles, these affectionate powers and sensations: And shall we abandon and destroy all the assistants to piety and goodness, which are wrought into the very frame of our beings?

It is granted, that our passions in this fallen state have their unhappy share of the general corruption of our nature: It is granted they are sometimes made the mischievous incentives to vice, and lead us astray from the path of holiness; and if they could never be reformed, they ought to be rooted out. But when they are once sanctified by a touch of the finger of God, and tinctured with a savor of piety, they become very pleasant and powerful springs of duty, both to God and man.

A holy fear of the great God our Creator, and a solicitous concern what shall become of us when we die, is the first and most general spring of religion: This wakens us to enquire “what we must do to please the God that made us.” When we arrive at some comfortable hope of our acceptance with God, then divine love promotes our piety and virtue: Then religion works within us by nobler principles, and it is advanced to higher degrees, than a mere principle of fear could raise it: All the passions of the man are subject to the government of holy love, and are employed by it

for heavenly purposes. When we love God supremely, we shall love men also, who are *made after the image of God*: From a due benevolence to men spring a thousand words and deeds of charity and pity, and godlike goodness. When our refined affections work in this manner toward God and men, we come by degrees to delight in all that is holy; we arrive at the true taste of religious pleasures, and make near approaches to the joys of the upper world, where holiness and pleasure are perfect and everlasting.

Thus it may be said, that after some general foundations laid in the knowledge of God and ourselves, "Religion begins in fear, it is carried on by love, and it ends in joy," Erroneous and unhappy is that philosophy that would banish these affections from human nature, which have so powerful an influence on the religious life, and assist our preparation for death and heaven.

II. "How happily has the blessed God suited his various revelations in Scripture to the powers of our nature?" How well are they fitted to work upon our affections, and to engage those active powers of the soul in the interests of religion and godliness! God himself, by his own methods of address to men, from one end of Scripture to the other, proves the truth of this discourse, and the advantage of the passions in things of religion. If God speaks of himself, how bright are the displays of his majesty and grandeur, to awaken our reverence and religious fear? He is the *Holy One that inhabits eternity*, who created all things by his word, the *Lord of lords, and King of kings*: He speaks, and the earth trembles, and the *pillars of heaven are astonished at his reproof*; Job ix. 6. xxvi. 11. He is a God *fearful*, or tremendous even in his *praises*; Exod. xv. 11. How surprising are the discoveries of his power and knowledge, to raise our wonder! He ranks the stars in their order, and *calls them all by their names, and not one fails* to appear at his call; Psalm cxlvii. 4. His eye surveys all the creation, and *knows the thoughts of the heart afar off*; Psalm cxxxix. 2. *He takes up the isles as a little thing*; Isaiah xl. 15. *He touches the mountains and they smoke*; Psalm civ. 32. *Who can stand before him*, or lift up the hand against him and prosper?

If he manifest the riches of his mercy and goodness, how is the divine language suited to strike upon all the springs of our hope and love, and to allure our hearts to him? *How excellent is thy loving kindness, O God!* Psalm xxxvi. 7. In his *favor is life*, and his love is *better than life*; Psalm lxiii. 3. He has so magnified his love towards us, and the exceeding riches of his grace, that *while we were enemies and rebels*, he sent his Son to die, in order to redeem us from death.

If he reveal to us Christ Jesus, his beloved Son, in what a glorious light does he place him before our eyes, to command our veneration and honor, our faith and our fervent affection? *He is the brightness of his Father's glory, and the express image of his person*; Heb. i. 3. *He was with God before the foundation of the world*, for by him the worlds were created; John i. 3. He is the man in whom *dwells all the fulness of the Godhead bodily*; Col. ii. 9. He is *God manifest in the flesh*; 1 Tim. iii. 16. He came down from the Father's bosom, *not to condemn the world*, but to expose his own life and blood for our sakes, to *make his soul an offering for our sins*, and to sustain unknown anguish and sorrows, in the room and stead of such rebels as we are.

If he opens heaven in the gospel, and brings *life and immortality to light*, what *thrones of glory*, what *crowns of righteousness* does he set before us! What mansions of paradise, what *rivers of pleasure* flowing from the throne of God, what rich fruits of the tree of life, what blissful visions in the presence of God and Christ, what blessed society of angels and holy souls are described, as the enjoyments of this heaven, on purpose to draw out our strongest desires towards it, and raise our joyful hope and our warmest zeal in the pursuit of it!

When he gives us a view of hell, how dreadful are the executions of divine wrath described there! What a gnawing *worm* in the conscience *that never dies*, what a *fire* that is *never quenched*! What burning *lakes of fire and brimstone*, kindled by the breath of an angry God! What troops of devils and damned spirits must be our companions there, and the *smoke of their torment ascending for ever and ever*! Rev. xiv. ii. How happily are these divine descriptions suited to awaken us out of security, and to excite us to passion of fear in the highest degree, that *knowing the terrors of the Lord*, we may stir up all our powers to *flee from the wrath to come*, and seek reconciliation to God by the blood of Christ.

If sin be mentioned in Scripture, in what odious colors is it set before us! It was sin that ruined our first parents, and drove them out of paradise, and spread death and misery through all this lower world: It is the *unrighteousness of men* that has awakened and *revealed the wrath of God*, in all the terrible instances of it, from the ancient apostasy and fall of angels in heaven, to the final destruction of this world by fire, and the punishment of men and devils in hell for ever: And all this that sin might appear exceeding sinful, and raise in us the highest hatred and utmost aversion.

The great and blessed God, who formed us at first, perfectly knows our frame; he is well acquainted with all the powers and

passions of human nature, and the design and use of them all : And therefore when he wrote these holy messages to us by his apostles and his prophets, he does not only reveal things to our understandings, which reason could not find out, and then leaves us to make the best of them ; but he warmly and powerfully addresses himself to the affectionate principle within us, in order to make the discoveries of his grace pierce deeper into our souls, that he might recover us from our guilt and misery, and persuade us to partake of his salvation.

III. We may learn from this discourse, “ how much it is the business of a minister of the gospel to engage the affections of his hearers, and to bring them over to the service of God and religion.” It is granted that the first work is to inform the understanding, to teach mankind what they are to believe concerning the great God, and what duties they owe to him. To this end the preacher must not only draw his doctrines from the light of nature, but from the word of God, and bring them down to the capacities of his hearers. It is his constant business to explain the word of God to men, to propose the naked truth with the strongest reasons to support it : He must endeavor to strike light into the mind, and convince the reason and judgment of men ; he must make it appear that they are guilty before God, and that there is no way of relief or hope but in and by Jesus, the great Mediator, and thus lead sinful and perishing men into the knowledge and faith of Christ, as an all-sufficient Saviour : All this is a necessary and indispensable part of his work, but it is not the whole of it. When the understanding is enlightened, the passions must also be addressed ; for God has wrought these powers into human nature, that they might be the vital and vigorous springs of actions and duties.

If the judgment be never so much convinced, yet while the affections remain unmoved, the work of religion will be begun with difficulty, and will drive on but very heavily. This the prophets and the apostles well knew ; and the great God, who employed them, knew it too ; and therefore he sent them armed with the powers of natural and divine oratory, to reach the inmost affections, to penetrate the heart, and to raise holy commotions in the very centre of the soul. What mean all the promises of the gospel, but to work upon our hope, and to raise our highest expectations ? What means the dreadful language of so many severe threatenings, but to shake us out of our security, and to rouse our fears ? If there had been no such principles as hope and fear in man, I am persuaded there would scarce have been any such things as promises and threatenings in the book of God. The word of the Lord

is compared to a fire and a hammer, *Jer. xxiii. 29. Is not my word like as a fire, saith the Lord, and like a hammer that breaketh the rock in pieces?* And it ought to be delivered and pronounced by the preachers of it in such a manner as may break the rocky hearts of stubborn sinners, as may fright them from their beloved iniquities, by the terror of everlasting burnings.

The holy Scriptures is a cabinet of divine curiosities, full of admirable allurements to invite and entertain awakened minds: It should be so happily unfolded and displayed by the preachers of it, as to represent in a noble manner the amazing grace and love of God, and the blessings of the gospel; and that with such a holy fervor, as to light up a divine flame of desire, hope and love, in the souls of all that hear it. To what purpose were the fancies of the holy writers enriched from heaven, with so bright and various a treasure of sacred images, but to raise the devout passions of their readers, by flashing upon their imagination with divine light? Their words are sunbeams, that not only diffuse a sacred illumination around the eye of the soul, but kindle the heart into life and zeal. To what end doth all the pomp of oratory display itself in their writings? To what end do they use all the arts of trope and figure, all the beauteous, the alluring, and the terrible colors that nature can afford, and that metaphor can borrow? Is it not all with a design to strike the soul of man in its most passionate powers, and spread vital religion through the inmost recesses of the heart?

Let the ministers of the word, who are zealous for the honor of God, for the glory of Christ, and for the success of their labors; read the writings of the holy prophets night and day, and make them their pattern, transferring the beauties of the law to the ministry of the gospel. The prophets do not merely tell us in a dry and cold manner, that sin is an evil thing, but they terribly denounce the thunder of the wrath of God against it, and pour down his vengeance on the heads of guilty rebels, to work upon our fear, to affright us from sin, and hasten us to fly to the arms of divine mercy. Nor do they merely say to us, that God is merciful; but in a most delightful and inviting manner, they display the boundless mercies of God, and the workings of his bowels of compassion, in all the pathetic language of tenderness, as though he were made of flesh and blood as we are.

When our blessed Lord himself came down on earth, to become a preacher of his Father's wrath and mercy, what eternal woes does he denounce against hypocrites and impenitent wretches? How gently does he invite the *weary and heavy-laden* sinners to

*come to him, that they may find rest!* Matt. xi. 28. How widely does he unfold the gates of his Father's mercy, and that even to murderers and adulterers, and thieves and blasphemers, that sinners of the largest size may enter in and be partakers of divine salvation. How happily does St. Paul imitate his blessed Master! *Knowing the terrors of the Lord, he persuaded men*, and he beseeches them, in the most endearing language, *in Christ's stead, to be reconciled to God*; 2 Cor. v. 11, 18—20. In what pathetic language doth he set before us the glorious love of God, in contriving the recovery of fallen men, and providing grace for them in Christ Jesus, before the world began; and saving them by such a surprising method of mingled severity and mercy, as the death and agonies of his most beloved Son! And all this to melt or soften our affections into repentance, love and gratitude! How wonderfully do the sacred writers attack the passions on all sides, *if by any means they may save a soul from hell!* Happy preachers, who approach this divine pattern!

Can any of us now content ourselves to bring cold and languid discourses into the pulpit, with this Bible under our hands? Will not all the sacred fervors of these inspired preachers reproach us to our faces, while we read and explain their sermons? Shall we go on to affect a calm and stupid politeness of phrase, in the very face of these warm and heavenly orators? Can we be content any longer to be the cold and lifeless rehearsers of the great and glorious things of our religion? Can we go on to speak to perishing sinners, who lie drowsy and slumbering on the brink of hell, in so soft, so calm, and gentle a manner, as though we were afraid to awaken them? What shall we say to these things? Does divine love send dreaming preachers to call dead sinners to life? Preachers that are content to leave their hearers asleep on the precipice of eternal destruction? Have they no such thing as passion belongs to them? Have they no pity? Have they no fear? Have they no sense of the worth of souls? Have they no springs of affection within them? Or do they think their hearers have none? Or is passion so vile a power, that it must be all devoted to things of flesh and sense, and must never be applied to objects divine and heavenly? Who taught any of us this lazy and drowsy practice? Did God or his prophets, did Christ or his apostles, instruct us in this modish art of still life, this lethargy of preaching, as it has been called by a late writer? Did the great God ever appoint statues for his ambassadors, to invite sinners to his mercy? Words of grace, written upon brass or marble, would do the work almost as well. Where the preachers become stone, no wonder if the hearers are moveless: But let

the ministers of the living word, who address men upon matters of infinite concernment, shew, if possible, that they are infinitely concerned about them. This leads my thoughts to the next remark.

IV. "How kindly has the grace and wisdom of God dealt with us, in appointing men of like passions with ourselves to become his ministers and our teachers in the things of religion!" Men, who have the same natural affections, who can feel within themselves all the train of devout passions, and express it in their holy ministrations! Men, who are subject to the same sins and follies, and are capable of the same religious fear and penitent sorrow! Men, who stand in need of the same salvation, and must be trained up to heaven by the exercise of the same faith, and love, and hope.

If angels had been made the only messengers of the gospel, angels, who have no flesh and blood, no communion in the same animal nature, no share of our fears and sorrows, no interest in the same redeeming mercy and pardon, they could not have expressed all the same passions, nor given us such an example of them in themselves. But a minister of the word, taken from among men, has been in a sinful state, and is now become a sincere Christian, or he should be so. He is supposed to have his own soul filled with love to God; he has felt his own fears awakened by the terrors of the Lord, and the threatenings of eternal misery; he has found his trembling soul encouraged to hope by the rich promises of grace; he has felt his own hatred rising against sin, his delight raised by the views and expectations of the favor of God, and eternal happiness in his presence. How well is such a teacher suited to set the terrors of hell, the evil of sin, and the riches of divine grace, in Christ Jesus, before the eyes of sinful men, who have the same natural passions with himself; and to turn these affectionate powers of his hearers into a religious channel, by representing these awful objects in a pathetic manner!

The preacher should be an example to the hearers, and then he preaches with most power and success. It is a well-known saying, "If you would draw out my tears, you must first weep yourself." How cold and dull, and unaffected with divine things, is mankind by nature! How careless and indolent is a whole assembly, when the preacher appears like a lifeless engine, pronouncing words of law or grace! When he speaks of divine things in such a dry, in such a cold and formal manner, as though they had no influence on his own heart! When the words freeze upon his lips, the hearts of hearers are freezing also: But where we find devout affection mingled with solid argument in the discourse, there the lips of the preacher seem to speak light and life at once, and he helps to

communicate the holy passion all around him, by feeling it first himself.

And here I am sure, we, who are honored with this sacred employment, have reason to examine our hearts, to reflect on our indolence, our lifeless conduct, and our cold labors in the pulpit; and mourn to think how imperfectly and how ineffectually we perform the awful work of the ministry. And shall our own affections still be so unraised and unmoved, while we speak of the great and momentous things of God, and Christ and religion, of death and judgment, of heaven and hell? Shall we always preach with such a deadness of spirit, and such a shameful absence of divine fervor? May the blessed God forgive your preacher, and may you forgive him; and may sovereign grace raise a warm flame of vital religion in his heart, and communicate it to all your souls!

V. If the passions are so useful in the solemn affairs of religion, "there is yet farther occasion to admire the wisdom and grace of God, that he has appointed several such institutions or parts of worship to belong to our holy religion, as are suited to work upon our senses, and thereby to awaken pious passions within us!"

Besides the voice of public prayer, and the affectionate speech and language of preaching the gospel, we are also taught and exhorted to sing the praises of God with holy melody. What a multitude of exhortations are found in the book of Psalms, *to make a joyful noise unto the Lord*, and to sing new songs before him in the kingdom of the Messiah. The advice of St. Paul in the New Testament echoes to the harp of David, and calls upon us to *speak* to one another, as well as to ourselves, *in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs*, and to sing and make *melody with grace in our hearts to the Lord*; Eph. v. 19. and Col. iii. 16. St. James gives the same encouragement: *If any be merry* or cheerful, let this passion of joy express itself in a devout manner, by singing psalms; *James v. 13*. How happily suited is this ordinance to give a loose to the devout soul in its pious and cheerful affections! What a variety of sanctified desires, and hopes and joys, may exert themselves in this religious practice, may kindle the souls of Christians into holy fervor, may raise them near to the gates of heaven, and the harmony of the blessed inhabitants there! Nor are pious sorrows utterly excluded from this ordinance: There are tunes and songs of mournful melody to solace the humble penitent, and to give a sweetness to his tears.

And besides all this, there are the two glorious and sacred ordinances of baptism and the Lord's-supper, wherein divine things are exhibited to us in a sensible manner by figures and emblems which are

designed to impress animal nature, and by the eyes to awaken the passions of the heart. How proper an emblem is *baptism* to represent our being washed in the blood of Christ? And the pouring out of water on the face or head, how well is it suited to represent the pouring out of the Spirit of God on men, and by this means to awaken the holy affections of hope and joy? How happily is the *Lord's-supper* contrived by divine wisdom to represent the death and love of our blessed Saviour, and the benefits that we derive from his sufferings? Jesus Christ crucified is *evidently set forth before our eyes*; Gal. iii. 1. He is represented even in his bleeding and dying love, while the bread is broken, and the wine poured out before us. O how should we loose the springs of pious passion at such a season! How should our love to our Redeemer kindle and rise high at the sight of the sufferings of the Son of God, who took our flesh and blood, that he might be capable of dying; that his flesh might be torn, and cut and bruised, that his blood might be spilled for our sakes, that he might bear such agonies as belonged to sinful creatures, with a gracious design to deliver us from misery and everlasting death. For ever blessed be the name of Jesus, who has suffered such pangs and sorrows in our stead, and blessed be his wisdom and grace who has appointed the continual repetition of such an ordinance, such a lively memorial of his dying love, to touch all the springs of religious affection within us.

VI. Since the passions of human nature have so considerable an influence in matters of religion, then we justly infer, that youth is the proper time to set about the important work of religion, when the passions are warm, and lively, and active. After we have been well instructed in the principles of Christianity, if we can but engage these sprightly powers of our natures betimes, on the side of God and godliness, we lay a happy foundation for the practice of piety all our lives. It is of admirable and unknown advantage, to have all the passions of the heart tinctured deep with heaven and religion in our early days. By this means virtue and piety will be fixed and rooted in the soul; it will stand the blasts of violent temptation, and bring forth the divine fruits of holiness through the following years. We shall be better prepared to combat every opposition; we shall be better secured against the snares that beset our youth; we shall resist the gay allurements of the world, and the flattering vanities that attack our senses and our souls in this dangerous season of life. It is the great cunning and the design of the devil and the world to work upon the warm passions of youth, to engage them in the service of sin and folly: Happy are those who are possessed of a divine antidote against this poison!

who have their passions all watchful and armed, ready to resist the assaults of hell, and to disappoint every attack that is made on virtue and religion !

VII. Is there so much advantage to be expected from the passions in the practice of religion ? Then " how much do we lose both of the profit and the pleasure of religion, for want of the engagement of our passions therein !" Therefore it is that virtue and godliness seem to carry with them so dull and heavy an aspect in the world ; therefore they appear so little inviting, because there are so few Christians, in this degenerate age, that have these affectionate powers of the soul deeply tinctured with the things of God. We live at a poor, low, cold rate, when we only talk of Christianity as a matter of dispute, and practise the outward devoirs and ceremonies of it as a matter of custom and form, while the heart and the passions of it have little share in our Christianity. If our love and desire, our hope and our joy, are all laid out on the things of sense and time, and we leave only a few cold reasonings to be employed in the most awful and sublime things of God, and heaven and eternity, it is no wonder we find so little of the pleasure of godliness, and that religion gains so little reputation, and so few followers. Oh ! what blessed lives did the primitive disciples of Christ enjoy ! What divine satisfaction, what heavenly glory, what convincing power attended their practice, when their whole souls, with all their affections, were devoted to God and Christ, and engaged in the affairs of the upper world ! They lived on earth like the children of heaven, and brought a foretaste of the pleasures of the upper world into these lower regions. Oh ! when shall these holy seasons return again ? When shall the noble principles of the Christian faith animate all the powers of nature, and make us live as becomes the followers and the worshippers of the holy Jesus.

MEDITATION. " Many and useful are the lessons which I have now learned from the happy influence of the passions, in the important affairs of my salvation. Blessed be God that I was not born in heathenism, and left merely to the teachings of the philosophers. Even the stoics, who were some of the best of them, deprive us of all the advantage of pious affections, and all the pleasurable sensations that may be derived from religion ; while they teach us to root the passions, if possible, out of our natures. My soul shall mourn in secret for my sins, and be ashamed of my follies : My heart shall fear and love the Lord my God, and rejoice and hope in Jesus my Saviour : My spirit, with all its warmest affections, is thine, O my God, forever and ever !

" Let all the sects of philosophy hide their heads, and lie silent ;

give me the Bible, where God himself speaks to me by his prophets and apostles : How divinely excellent are their writings ! With what sovereign influence do they address my fear and my hope, by the discoveries of a hell and a heaven ! How powerfully do they awaken my repentance for past sins, and melt my soul into holy sorrow ! In what an illustrious light do they set the majesty of the blessed God, and command my humble adoration ! How do they display the wonders of his wisdom, and the riches of his grace in Christ Jesus, to attract all my powers of desire and love ! What a blessed foundation have the Scriptures laid for an infinite variety of devout inferences and pathetic meditations, suited to my own case ? There I find the divine truths that can relieve my soul under every distress ; and there I learn the affectionate and devout method of applying them. In every needful hour I will go to the Book of God : God and his holy Book are my life, and my exceeding joy : Let my soul abide and live upon the divine variety of awful and transporting objects, which are set before me in those sacred pages. Let me be taught with sacred skill to spread abroad my thoughts on the right hand and on the left, and to expatiate on these holy and heavenly themes : They are fountains of life, and every stream flows with holiness and consolation. Oh ! may all my affections be under the command and influence of these sacred writings ; and while they give me intense delight, let them animate me to uncommon zeal in the practice of every duty !

“ And why should not our ministers, in all their labors of the sanctuary, imitate their inspired predecessors, the apostles and the prophets, in raising the pious passions of all that hear them ? Why should they not talk to men in such warm and pathetic language as God himself uses ? Doth not the great God, the Author of our nature, know what methods are most effectual to fill our hearts with divine sentiments, to draw us near to himself, and prepare us for heaven ? Has he condescended to give us so many glorious patterns of preaching in this world, and shall not all that are employed in the divine word copy out the spirit and fervor, the life and power of these inspired examples ! O may this dull and heavy heart of mine ever enjoy the happiness of a fervent and lively ministry, that may not only enlighten my understanding, but warm my heart !

“ And since God has ordained that I should be instructed in divine things by men of like passions with myself, may those whom Providence has appointed to instruct me be also examples of pious affection ; that while I see their hearts filled with religious fear, and holy love, and joy in the Lord, I may also be smitten with the same religious passions, may catch the same holy fire, and find all the

train of sprightly and devout sensations conveyed to the very centre of my soul !

“ Blessed be the wisdom and grace of my God, that has added sensible signs and emblems to the articles of the Christian faith. Let me remember, that I was washed with water in the name of the Father, and Son, and Holy Spirit ; and let me be ever jealous, lest I defile myself again : And when I attend the sacred institution of the Supper, let all the springs of pious passion be let loose, while I view the Son of God suffering for my sins : Let me feel the meltings of holy sorrow, and the highest and strongest efforts of gratitude and love to that glorious and divine Person who gave himself to death for me.

“ Have I heard that youth is a proper season for lively religion, because the passions of nature are then vigorous ; Lord, seize all my affectionate powers in this season of youth, and sanctify them to thyself. Prevent the influence of the wicked world by the early impressions of thy grace, that I may resist the vain allurements of flesh and sense, by having those sprightly powers of nature engaged first on the side of religion. Or if my years of youth have enjoyed this rich and divine favor, I would remember the early loving-kindness of my God, and praise his name in my advanced years with joy and thankfulness.

“ Grant, O Lord, that I may never lose the pleasure of religion, by suffering my affections to grow cold and languid. Quicken this lifeless spirit of mine by daily influences from above : Shine upon my soul, O Sun of Righteousness ; awaken my drowsy powers to active piety and zeal, and let all my passions conspire with my reasoning faculties to promote the interests of religion in my own heart and life, and to diffuse the savor of godliness all around me.”

*Amen.*

## DISCOURSE V.

### THE ABUSE OF THE PASSIONS IN RELIGION.

IN the two last discourses we learned the use of the passions in matters of religion, and what advantages may be expected from them in the Christian life : We proceed now to the fourth general ; and that is, to enquire into the abuse of the passions in religious concerns, or when the exercise of our affections, in the things of God, may be pronounced irregular, and in what manner they should be limited and restrained, and put under better conduct.

Abuse I. Then are the passions irregularly exercised, "when we suffer them to influence our opinions in religion, and to determine our judgment in any points of faith or practice." The passions were made to be servants to reason, to be governed by the judgment, and to be influenced by truth ; but they were never given to us to decide controversies, and to determine what is truth, and what is error. Even the best affections, and those that seem to have a strong tendency toward piety, are not always safe guides in this respect ; yet they are too often indulged to sway the mind in its search after truth or duty, as I shall make it appear in several instances :

1. Suppose a person should be exceedingly affected with the unlimited goodness and abounding grace of God ; if, by this pious affection towards God and his goodness, he is persuaded to think that God has no such severe vengeance for sinful and rebel creatures, and that he will not destroy such multitudes of mankind in hell as the Scripture asserts, or that their punishment shall not be so long and so terrible as God has expressly declared ; here the passion of love and esteem for the divine goodness acts in an irregular manner, for it takes off the eyes of the soul from his awful holiness and his strict justice, and the unknown evil that is in sin. It prevents the mind from giving due attention to God's express word, and to those perfections of the divine nature, and his wise and righteous government, which may demand such dreadful and eternal punishment, for the rebellion of a creature against the infinite dignity of its Creator and Governor.

2. Suppose a Christian has most powerful impressions made on

the passion of fear, by the tremendous ideas of God's majesty, and his punishing justice, and thence he concludes that the great God will pardon no wilful sins, that he will forgive no repeated iniquities, no sins after baptism and the Lord's-supper, or after vows or solemn engagements, that he will have no mercy upon apostates, even though they turn to him by repentance; this is yielding up truth to the passion of fear, and an abuse of our religious dread of the majesty of God; for such an opinion runs counter to the great design of the gospel, which assures us that *Christ came to save the chief of sinners*; 1 Tim. i. 15, to remove the guilt of wilful and repeated sins, and to provide forgiveness for some of the most profigate rebels, even for all that renounce their rebellion.

3. Some pious persons have had such an affectionate zeal to honor God, that they have been led by this passion to contrive various forms of service and ceremony, gay and costly rites, with long and painful exercises of devotion which God never appointed, and have introduced a number of them into his worship. A childish fondness to please the great God with bodily services has tempted them to forget his own divine prerogative to prescribe how men should worship him. They have been blinded with this sort of fondness for ceremony, in such a degree, as to lead them far astray from the divine simplicity of worship which the New Testament has appointed.

4. Some persons, out of a passionate desire to honor Christ, and ascribe the whole train of their blessings and salvation to him, have been tempted to think that they are to do nothing toward their own salvation, but to lie still and be saved without any labor or care of their own; so that they have sought no more after sanctification and holiness in themselves, than they have sought to make atonement for their own sins. But this zeal has much darkness in it, and betrays them into a gross mistake, as though they could not ascribe their salvation sufficiently to Christ, unless they fancied that he came to save them in their sins, rather than *to save them from sin*.

5. It is possible that a person may have so high an esteem and so excessive a love for some near relation, some Christian friend, some wise and pious minister of the gospel, that he sees no fault in them: He imitates all their practice, as though they were perfect patterns; he receives all their opinions for certain and divine truths, and believes every thing which they teach, as though they were infallible, without comparing it with the Bible, which is the only test of truth in matters of revealed religion. This affection of love to ministers or Christians is certainly irregular, when it tempts us

to set up their judgments, their practices, and their dictates, in the room of the word of God.

6. Again, it is the same culpable indulgence of our passions to sway our judgment, and bias our understanding, when our souls are warmed with the holy fire of love and devotion under a particular sermon, and we cry out, "This is the best sermon that ever was preached, or the finest that ever was composed." Or, perhaps, your devout affections flag and languish under a sermon; you sit indolent and unmoved, and then the sermon goes for a poor dry discourse, and the man that delivered it for a dull and heavy preacher. Each of these hasty and irregular judgments, built on the passions, is very common to Christians, and ought to be corrected.

7. I might add another instance akin to the last; and that is, when our devout affections of fear and hope, of holy love and heavenly delight, are raised in a place of public worship, whether at the established church, or among the several denominations of the Protestant dissenters, and immediately we conclude, "This is the right mode of worship, this is most agreeable to the gospel, and these people are the only true church of Christ." How weak is this reasoning! And yet how many are there who have been determined, both in their opinion and practice, for or against such a particular community of Christians, or mode of worship; and that for their whole lifetime, merely by the effects that one or two attendances at such a particular place of worship have had on their affections.

These arguments, drawn from the passions, have been often employed to support idolatry and transubstantiation, and all the wild inventions of men in the worship of God. What sighs and tears, what warm affections of sorrow and joy, have been sometimes produced by some ingenious orators in the Roman church, in their sermons at Lent, when they have held up a crucifix before the face of the people in the midst of their discourse. While they set forth the sufferings of our Saviour in the most pathetic language, the preachers have fallen down on their knees, and embraced and adored the wooden image: The natural affections of the hearers have been awakened in a very sensible manner, and being mingled with some thoughts of Christ and religion, they have fallen down and worshipped the idol, and have imagined all this to be pure devotion and piety towards God and his Son Jesus; and after all, they have made their lively passions a sufficient argument that God approved all their fooleries, though, in his own word, he hath expressly forbidden the worship of images.

I have read of another instance, when a poor devout creature hath come to the sacrament of the mass of the Romish church, and her passions being raised to a rapturous degree, as she thought, by the presence of Christ there, under the form of the consecrated wafer, she hath boldly declared, "should all the men on earth, and all the angels in heaven, join together to assure me, that God himself was not there, I would not believe them, for I have seen him, and felt his divine presence." What a wretched and mischievous abuse of passion is this, when persons shall suffer it to lead them to such unwarranted and sinful modes of worship, and persuade them to believe such strange doctrines, as are not only contrary to the express word of God, but a perfect contradiction to nature, sense, and reason ! Instances of this kind might be still multiplied. I have mentioned these few only, to make it appear how unreasonable a thing it is to form our opinions in religion by the influence of the passions.

II. Then must the affections in matters of religion be pronounced irregular, "when they run before the understanding, or when they rise higher toward any particular object than the judgment directs." As in the foregoing particular, I told you that the passions were not designed to be directing powers of the soul, in the search of truth or duty; so neither are they made to rule all within us; but they are to be governed by reason and understanding: And in whatsoever instances they assume a superiority over the understanding, or run before it, they are excessive and irregular. Let us enter into a few particulars :

1. Some persons, as soon as they begin to find further light dawning upon their minds, and are let into the knowledge of some doctrine or sentiment which they knew not before, immediately set their zeal to work: Their zeal is all on a flame to propagate and promote this new lesson of truth, before their own hearts are well established in it, upon solid reasonings, and before they have considered whether it be a doctrine of great importance, and whether it merit such a degree of zeal. How common a case is it among Christians, and too often found among ministers of the gospel, to give a loose to their affections at the first glimpse of some pleasing opinion, or some fresh discovery of what they call truth. They help out the weakness of the proof by the strength of their passions, and by the pleasure they take in the opinion they have embraced. This confirms their assent too soon, and they grow deaf to the arguments that are brought to oppose it. They construe every text in the Scripture to support this doctrine, they bring in the prophets and apostles to maintain it. They fancy they see

it in a thousand verses of their Bibles, and they pronounce all men heretics that dare maintain the contrary opinions. Their conduct in this matter is so vehement, as though every gleam of light were sufficient to determine their faith, because it happens to fire their affections; they grow so warm about it, as though every opinion in religion were fundamental; and so fiery is their zeal, as though every mistake deserved the severest censures.

Nor is this the case of the Christians only, with relation to the new opinions they receive: There are too many who take up most of their articles of faith at first without due examination, and without sufficient argument: Their veneration for great names, or their affection to a particular party, has determined their opinions long ago: Their passions and other prejudices have formed their schemes of doctrines, with the neglect or abuse of their understandings, and yet they pronounce as positively upon truth and error, as though they were infallible. Happy are those whose faith is built on better foundations!

2. Again, there are some persons, when they begin to be convinced that such a particular practice is culpable or unlawful, their indignation is too soon awakened, and rises too high; immediately they condemn it, as inconsistent with salvation: Their hatred of it grows as violent as if it were blasphemy or idolatry: They are ready to break out into hard speeches and railing accusations against all that practise it, and pronounce them apostates and sinners of the first rank. The sudden rise and warmth of their passions does not suffer them to consider, that there are some faults and follies that a good Christian may be guilty of through ignorance or inadvertence; there are some sins that do not carry in them such malignity and poison as to destroy all our Christianity.

3. There have been some weak Christians, when they have heard a sermon, or read a discourse full of sublime language and mysterious darkness, and especially, if the style and manner has been very pathetic, that have been raptured and transported, as though it contained the deepest sense, the noblest truths of religion, and the highest discoveries of grace and the gospel: Whereas, perhaps, there may be scarce any thing in it which has a just agreement with reason or Scripture; but when well examined, it proves to be a mere jargon of words, a mixture of unintelligible and unmeaning sounds, with some affectionate airs among them, whereby their passions were fired, and that without knowledge, and beyond all reason: And it is well, if after these flashes of affection and violent transports, they are not deluded into shameful

iniquities. This has been the case of some high pretenders in elder and later days. They have *spoken great swelling words of vanity*, they are *murmurers* and *complainers* against the common rank of Christians, but they *walk after their own ungodly lusts*; they turn *the grace of God into lasciviousness*, and *they allure others into lusts of the flesh, through much wantonness*, and *while they promise liberty, they are the servants of corruption*; 2 Peter ii. 18, 19. and Jude, verses 4, 16, 18.

4. This irregular exercise of the affections running before reason, is eminently exemplified also in another weak sort of people, who are very sincere in the main, but if they read an awful and terrible threatening, or if they hear it pronounced in the pulpit with a just degree of authority and proper accent, their fears are raised in an excessive manner, and their soul is filled with long sorrows and doubtings: Or, if they happen to read or hear a sentence of comfort, they are transported with sudden joy, and rise almost to assurance of the love of God: They give themselves up to sudden efforts of passion before they suffer themselves to enquire according to scriptural grounds, whether this text of threatenings, or whether the other sentence of comfort, do really belong to them or no.

There are many other cases, wherein it is evident, that the affections in the things of religion get the start of the understanding, and run far before it. But I proceed,

III. It is a very gross abuse of the affections, "when we encourage them to rise high, and grow very warm about the lesser things of religion, and yet are content to be cold and indifferent in matters of the highest importance." There are too many Christians whose warmest zeal is employed about the *mint, the anise, and the cummin* of Christianity; Matt. xxiii. 23, and have few passions awakened or engaged in the weighty things of the law, or the gospel. They are furiously intent upon speculative notions, and some peculiar opinions, that distinguish the little parties of Christendom, and crumble the church to pieces: Their fears, their hopes, their wishes, their desires, their grief and joy, are all employed in party quarrels and in a strife of words: But they are thoughtless and indolent about the momentous duties of love to God, and Christ, of justice to men, of charity to fellow-creatures and fellow-Christians. So a sickly fancy is fond of trifles, and careless of solid treasures: So children have their little souls wrapped up in painted toys, while the matters of manly life and necessary business awaken no desire, no delight in them.

Suppose a man mourns to see the church of England lose ground

in the nation, or to see the assemblies of Protestant dissenters grow thin and decrease, and yet he finds not his soul grieved, and his heart mourn over the atheism and profaneness of the land, the drunkenness and lewdness, the growing heathenism and infidelity of the age: Or suppose a Christian triumphs to see the controversy about baptism well managed, and his joys arise, according as his own opinion is bravely supported, while at the same time he takes little pleasure to hear of the conversion of a sinner, or that a wicked family is grown religious. What shall we think of such a person? Is not his religion in a childish and sickly state? Are not his passions, even about religious objects, managed in a very irregular manner, and worthy of just and severe reproof?

IV. There is also another evil conduct of the affections in the matters of religion; and that is, "when they express themselves in an improper or indecent manner, and especially in such a way as is unnatural and uninstituted, foolish and ridiculous, savage and barbarous, contrary to the dictates of reason and human nature, or the word of God." Take, for instance, some of the persecutors and idolaters, the bigots and enthusiasts of the church of Rome. And I wish such persecution and bigotry, enthusiasm and idolatry, were never found among any other sects of Christians.

1. With what furious and burning barbarity do popish persecutors express their zeal for their religion? They arm their tongues and their pens with bitter reproaches and gall against those who divide from their communion, and would reform their gross corruptions; and they still profess it is out of love to Christ, and to the souls of men, that they imprison, cut, burn, torment, and destroy their fellow-Christians. *O my soul, come not into their secrets, nor learn such unrighteous and bloody zeal!*

2. Survey popish idolaters. They imagine they can never shew their affectionate devotion to Christ sufficiently, without making images of a crucified man, and placing them continually in their sight, in order to pay their worship to Christ by these unappointed mediums. Sometimes they wear these little idols in their bosom, near their heart, and then they think they manifest how much their heart loves him. They kiss these wooden baubles, or their silver figures, with a strange childish fondness, and sometimes bedew them with their tears, to shew their inward affection to Jesus, their Saviour. There may be much animal passion, much commotion of nature and the flesh in these practices, with very little spiritual love. Sometimes they make pictures even of God the Father, and then perform their devotions toward them with forbidden ceremonies, and break God's second commandment to ex-

press their love to him. Strange and preposterous expressions of love, to practise what he forbids so often in his word, and that upon severe penalties!

3. Turn your eyes now to the Romish enthusiasts. God forbid that I should so condemn all that are educated in that church, as though there was no sincere devotion among them, though the church itself is abominably corrupt: But it is well known, that when some of these devotees have fancied themselves possessed with such a sublime love to God, that they have thrown themselves into odd postures and strange disorders of body, and appeared more like distracted persons than sober Christians, as though it must be something not human that must express their divine affections. Others have imagined they could never do nor suffer enough to manifest the inward fire of that love to God which dwelt in their heart, and they have contrived what torments they should inflict upon themselves, as they used to express it, for the love of God.

Others to shew their sorrow for having offended him, have not only worn sackcloth upon their skin, but they have scourged themselves, till they have been covered with blood, they have bound themselves with vows to travel barefoot, and to make long and tedious pilgrimages to distant lands. Some have sent themselves to death by voluntary starving; others have tortured and destroyed themselves with excessive thirst; and either made their bodies miserable, or put an end to life to show their love to God. These are wild and frantic superstitions indeed, extravagant methods of expressing any devout passion, and most of them utterly unlawful. Let us remember, that the religion which God teaches, has nothing in it contrary to the light of nature; nor must our inward piety break in upon the rules of reason and decency, when we would express it by any outward signs.

There are some religious affections, which are very properly expressed and manifested in the common way, whereby nature usually expresses those inward sensations of the soul. Godly sorrow naturally vents itself in groans and tears: *Psalm vi. 6.* Holy joy sometimes by a smile of the countenance, and often by the voice of sacred melody: And this not only appears in the example of the royal Psalmist, but in the precepts of the New Testament; *Eph. v. 19. James v. 13.* *If any be merry let him sing psalms.* Pious and earnest desires of the presence of God, and of his favor, are signified by stretching of the arm towards him, or lifting up the eyes and hands to him; *Psalms lxviii. 31. and xxviii. 2 and cxxi, 1, 2.*

Repentance and shame is naturally signified by downcast eyes or blushing; *Luke xviii. 13. Ezra ix. 6.*

Some of the stronger outward appearances, and vehement tokens of inward holy passion, are indeed rather to be indulged in private than in public worship: but in all our behavior in this respect, let us take heed that the inward affection is sincere, and is the real spring of all the outward signs and expressions. Let us see to it, that we indulge not that practice which our Saviour so much condemns in the hypocrites of his day; *Matt. vi. 16.* Let us make no sad faces, nor put on dismal airs, nor smite the breast with the hand, and disfigure our countenances, merely to make the world believe that we are penitents: Nor let us make ourselves remarkable in public and mixed company, by turning up our eyes to heaven, to tell the world how often we pray in the midst of our secular affairs; though secret prayer may and ought to be sometimes rising to God, and we may lift an eye to him, while we are among men: Nor in public worship should we use frequent and loud groanings, to persuade our neighbors that we are more deeply affected with divine things than they; though devoted affection will sometimes vent a groan or a sigh.

But above all let us take heed lest we make use of these outward colors and forms of passion to cover the want of inward devotion and piety. We should always make our religion appear to the world with a natural and becoming aspect; and in a decent dress to invite, and not forbid those who behold us. Let us take care that we do not disguise our holy Christianity, nor make it look like an irrational thing, by unmanly or unbecoming sounds or gestures; lest we thereby expose ourselves to the charge of hypocrisy, and give up our holy profession to the ridicule and contempt of the profane world.

V. It is an irregular management in the affairs of religion, or an abuse of devout passions, "when we content ourselves with the exercise of these inward and affectionate sensations of the mind, while they have no influence on the holiness of our conversation." Consider, my friends, what were the passions made for? Not merely for the pleasure of human nature, but to give it vigor and power for useful actions. I have but a poor pretence to be a sincere lover of Christ, if I rejoice to hear his name repeated often in a sermon, and say never so many affectionate things of him in the language of the book of Cauticles, and yet take no care to keep his commandments: Whereas this is the appointed way wherein Christ has required his disciples to manifest their love to him; *John xiv. 15. If ye love me, keep my commandments; chap. xv. 14. Then*

*are ye my friends, if ye do whatsoever I command you.* In vain do I pretend to pious sorrows, in vain do I mourn for some great and grievous sin, in my secret retirements, or in public worship, if my life be spent among the gay follies and vanities of the world ; if I run into new temptations whensoever the world beckons to me, and follow every son of mirth that waves the hand of invitation.

True Christianity, where it reigns in the heart, will make itself appear in the purity of life. We should always suspect those flatteries of affection, those sudden inward sensations of sorrow or delight, which have no power to produce the fruits of holiness in our daily conversation. *The fruits of the Spirit* are found in the life and the heart together, as they are described ; *Gal. v. 22.* Love to God and man, joy in holy things, *peace of conscience*, and peace with all men, as far as possible, *long-suffering, gentleness, goodness, faith*, that is, *faithfulness, meekness, temperance*, and particularly a crucifixion of all sinful affections. Let us never content ourselves with any exercise of lively devotion, unless we feel our corrupt affections in some measure subdued thereby.

O how shameful a sight is it, and what a reproach to the profession of the gospel, to see a Christian just come from church and holy ordinances, where his devout affections have been raised, and immediately to find him breaking out into vain, earthly merriment, and carried away with idle and sensual discourse ! What a scandal is it to our religion, to see some zealous professors coming down from their closet, where they fancy they have been favored with holy raptures, and enjoyed much converse with God ; where they think they have exercised repentance and love, and holy desires, and yet immediately fall into a fit of rage against their servants or children for mere trifles, and express their wrath in very unchristian language and indecent behavior. This is an open contradiction to their profession ; and the shop, and the parlor, or perhaps the kitchen, gives the lie to the pretences of the closet. O glorious evidences of a disciple of Christ, where all the pious passions join to resist every temptation ! Where divine love keeps warm at the heart, where it purifies the whole behavior, and exalts the life of men near to the life of angels !

VI. That must certainly be a culpable conduct, with regard to our religious affections, "when they are suffered to entrench upon other duties either to God or man, and withhold us from the proper business of our place and station in the world." Though devout passions should be indulged at proper seasons, yet they should not so far govern all the powers of nature, and engross the moments of

life, as to make us neglect any necessary work, to which the providence of God hath called us.

This is the case, when persons find so much sweetness in their religious retirements, that they dwell there too many hours of the day, and neglect the care of their families, the conduct of their children and servants, and other necessary duties of life, and let all things run at random in their household, under the excuse of religion and converse with God : Though I must confess this is so uncommon a fault in our godless and irreligious age, that it may almost pass without censure.

It is the same culpable conduct, when Christians experience a sacred and affectionate relish of public ordinances, and they are tempted to run from sermon to sermon, from lecture to lecture, in order to maintain their spiritual pleasure with a slight and careless performance of relative duties. It is yet more criminal in persons of low circumstances in the world, who would spend all their time in hearing or reading good things, or at some religious assemblies or conferences, while they grossly and grievously neglect their common duties of providing for themselves and their children. They are ready to expect that the rich should maintain them, while they make their devout affections an excuse for their shameful idleness and sloth. Let us remember there is a time for working as well as a time for praying, or hearing : *Every thing is beautiful in its season ; Eccles. iii. 11.*

This sort of excessive and irregular affection appears also eminently, when, out of pity to the poor, or love to the public worship of God, dying persons leave vast legacies to the building of churches and hospitals, and endow almshouses liberally, while their near kindred, and perhaps their own descendants, are in a starving condition, or want the conveniences of life. He that takes no care of his nearest relations living or dying, is in that respect *worse than an infidel.* God does not love *robbery for burnt-offering*, nor does he permit us to abandon our natural affection to our fellow-creatures, to shew our love or zeal for our Creator in such instances as these :

VII. Religious passion is then certainly exercised in a very irregular and criminal manner, "when we suffer it to degenerate into carnal and vicious affections, and, as the apostle expresses it in another place, when we *begin in the Spirit and end in the flesh* ; Gal. iii. 3. Examples of this kind are too common in the present age of Christians.

1. Zeal may turn into wrath and fury. A high veneration for the glorious truths of the gospel, and a warm zeal for the defence

of them, has too often degenerated into malice and indignation against those who differ from us in religious sentiments ; and that too in matters which are of small importance to practical godliness. Pious zeal against dangerous errors is a just and laudable thing, when it carries moderation and good temper with it, and does not break out into wrath and malignity against the persons of those who are unhappily betrayed into those mistakes : But it becomes a guilty passion, and hateful in the eyes of God our Saviour, when it breaks all the bonds of charity and Christian love. The flaming bigot and the persecutor come in naturally at every turn, for their share of this caution and reproof, as abusers of the passions in the things of God and religion.

When we come sometimes into worshipping assemblies, where a man of burning zeal leads the worship, we find the wildfire of his own passions spreading through the whole congregation. Is it not a shameful thing to hear the preacher railing against his brethren, because they differ a little from him, and will not use some unscriptural modes of expression, or will not admit some favorite explications of a verse of Scripture, or will not consent to practise some lesser forms and rites of worship ? And it is a matter of equal shame to see many persons, who imagine themselves to be Christians of the first rank, take a malicious pleasure to hear such scurrilous reproaches and public railings against their fellow-Christians, and curses denounced against them, because they differ in ceremonies and phrases. And the crime is certainly the greater, if these opinions and forms, wherein they disagree, are but of small importance. This is a wretched abuse of passion in the things of God ; and yet so *deceitful is the heart of man*, and so given up to self-flattery, that perhaps both the preacher and the hearers vainly presume they are expressing a sacred love for divine truth, and paying sublime service to God, and their Saviour. What madness is mixed with mistaken zeal !

2. There is another instance of the abuse of the passions, which is very near akin to this, and may stand next in rank ; and that is, when we behold the vices of men with holy aversion and hatred, and immediately transfer this hatred to their persons, whereas we ought to pity and pray for them : Or when we see a fellow-Christian fall into sin, and because we hate the sin, we hate the sinner too, and suffer our hatred to grow into disdain and irreconcileable enmity, and that even though the offender has given signs of sincere repentance. This is not Christian zeal, but human corruption ; and such criminal indulgence of the passions, which ought to be mortified, if ever we would be imitators of the holy Jesus : He

hated even the least sin, but loved and saved the greatest of sinners, and delighted to receive penitents to his love.

3. It is a culpable exercise of the passions, when holy emulation degenerates into envy. At first we admire the virtues of others, we respect their persons highly, we imitate their conduct, and aspire after the same degrees of piety and goodness; we have a holy ambition to equal them in every grace, and in every virtue, and if possible to exceed them; all this is right and worthy of praise; but when I fall short of the attainments of my neighbor, and envy him on the account of his superior character; when I feel an inward displeasure against my brother, because his gifts or graces shine brighter than mine, then the holy affection degenerates, and becomes a *lust of the flesh*, instead of a *fruit of the Spirit*.

4. I might give another instance also of this kind; and that is, when love to fellow-Christians begins on a spiritual account, between persons of different sexes, and there is a mutual delight in each other's company and pious conversation; but without great watchfulness, this Christian love may be in danger of degenerating into vicious desires and corrupt passions.

5. It may be worth our notice also, that there is another danger of the degeneracy of a devout passion, when persons of a pious and cheerful spirit have taken great delight in singing the praises of God, and meet together at the stated seasons for this purpose; but in time, this has sensibly sunk into the pleasure of the ear, into a mere natural relish of harmony, and delight of sounds well connected. This may have easily happened, when fine instruments of church music have been used to assist psalmody, or when persons pride themselves in too nice and delicate a skill in singing, or too exquisite a taste in harmony, even though the words which they sing may be holy and religious.

To guard against these dangers, let Christians frequently enter into their own hearts, and endeavor, as far as possible, to examine their spirit and conscience, to distinguish between their inward workings of piety, and the mere exercises of animal nature, or the workings of corrupt affection, and set a constant guard upon their hearts in this respect.

VIII. The last thing I shall mention, wherein some Christians are guilty of an irregular conduct, with regard to their affections in matters of religion, is this, "when they live entirely by their devout passions, and make these the only rules of self-enquiry concerning their temper, their habitual state of soul, and their present frame of spirit, and concerning every thing that belongs to their Christianity." Such persons have little regard to the growth of

their knowledge, the improvement of their understanding in the things of God, the steady and fixed bent of their will toward religion, and the constant regular course of a holy conversation. They seem to make all their religion consist in a few warm and pious affections. There are two sorts of persons subject to this mistake.

1. Awakened sinners, who feel their passions of fear and desire excited by some convincing sermon, or awful providence, and the rich doctrines of grace suited to their case and state, raise in them some hopes of heaven, and sensitive commotions of joy. This may continue for many months, and incline them to infer that they are converted from sin to God; and being also in a great measure reformed in their lives, they imagine they are new creatures, and all is safe for eternity: Whereas they never had a heart fixed in the love of God, and in the hatred of every sin; they never became hearty and resolved Christians; and in a little time their devout passions die, and all their religion vanishes, for it had no root.

2. There are also some real converts, who are but weak, and live too much by their passions. If their hope, and desire, and delight, are but engaged and raised high in their secret retirement, or in public worship, then they are good Christians indeed, in a heavenly state, and they think exceeding well of themselves: But if at any time there is a damp upon their passions, through the indisposition of their animal nature, when they feel not a great degree of animal fervor powerfully assisting their pious exercises, they are ready to pronounce against themselves; they sink into great despondencies, and imagine they have no true grace.

Such Christians as these live very much by sudden fits and starts of devotion, without that uniform and steady spring of faith and holiness, which would render their religion more even and uniform, more honorable to God, and comfortable to themselves. They are always high on the wing, or else lying moveless on the ground: They are ever in the heights or the depths, travelling on bright mountains with the songs of heaven on their lips, or groaning and laboring through the dark valleys, and never walking onward, as on an even plain, toward heaven.

There is much danger, lest such sort of professors as these two, which I have mentioned, should deceive themselves, if not in judging of the truth of their graces, yet, at least, in their opinion, of the strength or weakness of them, for they judge merely by their affections. Let us watch against this danger, and remember, that though the passions are of excellent use in religion, yet they were never designed to stand in the place of reason or judgment, or to

supply the room of an enlightened understanding, a sanctified will, and a conversation attended with all the fruits of holiness. Thus I have finished what I designed to say concerning the abuse of the passions in religion. The remarks which I shall make on this head of discourse are these three :

I. " Those Christians are best prepared for the useful and pious exercises of their passions in religion, who have laid the foundations of it in a regular knowledge of the things of God." Let your understanding, therefore, be fully persuaded of the necessity and excellency of religion, of the duties you owe to God, as your Maker and Governor ; let all your reasoning powers be convinced of the evil of sin, of the holiness and justice of God, of the danger of eternal death, of the relief and hope that is held forth in the gospel of Christ, of the necessity of faith and holiness, in order to eternal happiness ; and amidst all the workings of devout affections, maintain a constant exercise of your reason and judgment. The Scripture itself was not given us to make the use of our reason needless, but to assist its operations, and to render it more successful in our enquiries into the things of our everlasting welfare. Knowledge and affection should go hand in hand in all the affairs of religion : The more we know of God and the things of the upper world, we shall have the stronger spring for our holy passions, and a more secure guard against any excesses and irregularities in the exercise of them.

II. " As it is the business of a preacher to assist the devout passions, so it is part of his work to guard his hearers against the abuse of them." We have granted and maintained, that it is the business of every sacred orator to raise the affections of men toward the things of God : Let him therefore manage his divine arguments in such a manner as to awaken the fears, the hopes, the desires, the penitent sorrows, and the pious joys, of the whole assembly, in a sublime degree ; but, in order to secure them from excesses and irregularities of every kind, let him lay the foundations of their religion in clear ideas of divine things, and in a just and proper explication of the holy Scriptures.

When he has a mind to lead his hearers into any particular religious sentiments, which he firmly believes to be true, and which he supposes useful to their edification, let him not begin with their passions, and address himself to them in the first place : He must not artfully practise upon these warm and animal powers, before he has set these doctrines or sentiments of his in a fair and convincing light before the eye of their understanding and their reasoning faculties : The affections are neither the guides to truth, nor the

judges of it; nor must the preacher set them to their sprightly and fervent work, till he has informed the mind by clear explication and sincere argument. The sun in the heavens gives us a fair document in this case: His light comes before his heat: The dawn of the morning grows up by degrees, and introduces the fervors of noon. So let the preacher diffuse his light over the assembly, before he kindle their warm affections. Let him convince their reason and judgment of the truth of every article of religion which he persuades them to believe; let him show the duty and the necessity of every part of holiness which he prescribes for their practice. Let him imitate that noble pattern of divine oratory, Apollos at Ephesus, who *was an eloquent man, and mighty in the Scriptures, he was fervent in spirit*, and could raise the passions of those that heard him, yet he was willing to kindle the flame of his own oratory by the light of his own understanding, and when he himself *had learned the way of God more perfectly, he mightily convinced the Jews by divine argument, and showed them by the Scriptures, that Jesus was the Christ; Acts xviii. 24, 28.* Then there was a proper way made for his following zeal and fervor to display themselves.

III. If the passions are of such eminent service in religion, and yet they are in danger of unruly excesses, "how much need have we to beg earnestly at the throne of grace, that they may be all sanctified?" It is only the sanctifying influence of the blessed Spirit, that can excite them in a due degree, and can give them proper limits and regulations. It is nothing but divine grace can raise them to a due height on all just occasions, and yet preserve them from any irregular conduct and unhappy effects.

In this sinful state of corrupt nature, we are averse to the things of God: Our passions are violent toward sensible objects, but are hardly moved by the most important discoveries in religion. It is God alone who can correct and change their corrupt bias, and give them a divine tendency. They are so ready to take a wrong turn, and sometimes to make wide mischief, even in the matters of religion, that God alone can keep them constant in their right situation and course. They are living wheels of strong and powerful movement in human nature, but they make wretched work if they are not put in motion by a regular and happy spring. They are glorious and noble instruments of religion, when under good conduct, but they are ungovernable and mischievous powers when they go astray; and they are also too prone to wander from their proper place and duty. Let it, therefore, be the matter of our daily prayer, that we may be "sanctified throughout in body, soul, and

spirit ;" 1 *Thess.* v. 23, and that every faculty of our nature may lend its proper aid to the kingdom of grace within us, till we are trained up by the piety of this present state, and made fit for the unknown exercises of a sublimer sort of devotion in the kingdom of glory.

MEDITATION. "What a wide and unhappy ruin has the fall of man spread over all the powers of our souls ! Our understanding is darkened, our will grown perverse, and our passions corrupt and irregular in their exercises ; and even when they are engaged about the things of God, their conduct is not always wise and holy. We have seen what glorious instruments they are, when managed by the hands of divine grace, to promote piety and goodness : But if they are left to themselves, they will sometimes make wild mischief, even in the sacred concerns of religion.

"Guard and secure me, O my God, against those false lights which my affections may cast upon the objects I converse with, and so delude my judgment. Suffer me not to be imposed on by the false colors, in which my passion may happen to dress up error, and make it look like truth. Let my judgment be always directed steadily by the reason of things and the discoveries of thy word, and not by the delusive flatteries of the passions. Let me remember that these were not given for my guides in the search of duty or truth ; they were not made to teach me what is false and what is true, but to awaken me with the greater zeal to pursue truth, and to practise whatever I learn to be my duty.

"May I be so happy as always to lay solid reason and Scripture for the foundation, whence my devout affections may take their rise, and ascend high toward God ! Let them never flutter in the dark, nor break away from the government of my understanding ; that if, at any time, my conscience calls me to account for the warmest and boldest flights of my pious affections, I may be able to support and justify them all upon the foot of reason, and by the divine examples and encouragements of the word of God.

"If, at any time, my zeal has been too fervent about the lesser matters of Christianity, while it has been cold and listless in the things of the highest importance, I would take shame to myself in the sight of God and men. Blessed Jesus, never suffer my anxieties, my fears, my desires, my joys to rise, but in due proportion to the worth and importance of their objects. Let my name never be numbered among those men of irregular zeal, who *strain at a gnat, and swallow a camel* ; Matt. xxiii. 24. When I read or hear of the idolaters and the bigots of the church of Rome, in what a

strange childish manner, and with what ridiculous fopperies they express their love to God and Christ, and to saints departed ; when I read how they scourge their bodies to shew their sorrow for sin, and put their flesh to torments which God never appointed nor required ; when I have been told how they cut and burn and destroy their fellow-Christians, animated by a supposed zeal for God and his church, I bless God that I have been taught better methods of expressing my devout affections. *Come not, O my soul, into their secrets, to their assemblies be thou not united ; Gen. xl ix. 6.* Nor let my religion make me sour and unsociable ; nor let me indulge awkward gestures, or put on a distorted countenance, nor appear with any unmanly or unbecoming airs, to express the inward workings of my heart. I am afraid of all those outward forms which would turn piety into contempt before an ungodly world, who take all occasions to ridicule things sacred.

"I would remember that religion does not consist in a warm flush of affection, or in sudden efforts of devout joy, where holiness has no settled root in the heart, nor any visible fruits in the conversation. Let me be all of a piece, and if my Christianity raises my pious passions in the church, or in the closet, may the same Christian spirit be found in all my daily behavior : May it regulate my words, and adorn my actions, that God, angels, and men may see the golden thread of religion running through my heart and life, in a uniform manner, in all times, places, and stations. Never let my devotions break in upon any part of other necessary duties which I owe to God or man : The great God does not permit sacrifice to stand in the room of works of mercy, nor will he allow of *robbery for a burnt-offering*. Remember this, O my soul !

"Help me, O my God, to keep up my pious affections to their own character, and let them not degenerate into a vicious or criminal temper of mind. Suffer not my zeal against error to turn into fury against a mistaken brother. Teach me to pity the man, while I endeavor to cure his unhappy mistakes by the only method which Christ has appointed, by gentle reasoning, by arguments drawn from Scripture, by the winning arts of love and goodness, and by earnest prayer for his recovery from the error of his way. Let me watch against every instance wherein holy affections may be corrupted, and turned into vice or folly.

"Though I desire to have my passions deeply tinctured by the things of God, yet I would not live entirely by the efforts of devout passion, nor judge of my state and frame merely by these sorts of emotion. It is possible that sudden flashes of affection may some-

times deceive our judgment, and make us determine suddenly and unjustly, concerning ourselves and our state Godward. Let my religion and love to God be deeply rooted in the mind, and in the principles of solid knowledge; let my will be strongly and unchangeably inclined towards God and things heavenly; and let my love and hope, my desire, my sorrow, and my joy, be all awake and engaged, in proper seasons, to promote the divine work within me, and make blessed advances daily toward the world of perfection." *Amen.*

## DISCOURSE VI.

THE AFFECTIONATE CHRISTIAN VINDICATED, AND THE SINCERE SOUL COMFORTED UNDER HIS COMPLAINTS OF DEADNESS, &c.

WE have seen what are the various advantages that may be derived from the exercise of the passions in the concerns of religion; and we have taken notice of the irregularities to which they are liable, and have endeavored to guard against the abuse of them. We proceed now to the fifth general head of discourse which was proposed, and that is, to vindicate the affectionate Christian from the unjust reproaches of men, in his warmest exercises of love to God and devotion. Surely one would think there appears sufficient reason for pious souls to indulge their most lively affections in worship, and that without any abuse of their reason, or abasement of their religion. These inward sensations of holy delight, these secret joys which a stranger intermeddles not with, these experimental parts of godliness, may be set in a rational light, and be justified to the understanding of men. What is there in all this account of a Christian's love to God, and the regulated exercise of pious passions, that is not agreeable to solid reason, and to the natural notions that we have of God and our duty, as well as to the brighter discoveries we have by divine revelation? What is there in all these workings of a holy soul, but what is the just and proper result of the nature of man, as an inferior spirit, in the present circumstances of flesh and blood, meditating on God, the infinite and supreme Spirit, with a lively hope of his favor and acceptance?

Will the deist and the infidel tell me, that "this is all mechanical religion, the mere effect of animal nature, the visionary scenes of fancy, and the boilings of a warm imagination?" Will they laugh at all this account, and say, "there is nothing in it but the passionate ferments of flesh and blood, which we mistake for a reasonable religion and worship?" I would enter the lists with them, even upon the foot of reason, and justify these sensations of experimental Christianity, by a few plain and gradual steps of enunciation.

1. Is not the great God the Creator and supreme Governor of all things? Is he not the most glorious and most excellent Spirit? Is he not a Being of infinite majesty, of holiness, and of mercy? Is he not a God of awful sovereignty, a wise ruler, and righteous judge? Is he not kind and compassionate toward his humble and obedient creatures? Is he not a fountain of eternal blessedness, and an all-sufficient and everlasting good to those that seek and serve him? Is he not a God that hath terrors to vindicate his government, and to punish those that break his law? Is not this the God that the wiser and better sort of heathens acknowledged, and do acknowledge, as well as the Christians?

2. Is not the mind of man made capable, in some measure, of knowing this God? And are we not bound to acquaint ourselves with him? Is not man therefore bound to get these notions and ideas of the attributes of God his Maker represented to his mind in the truest, the fairest, and the strongest light? Or are the faintest and feeblest notions of our Creator the best? Are we not under an obligation sometimes to recollect these ideas of God; when we come to converse humbly with him? Should we not endeavor to bring them fresh and strong into our memory, and to make his majesty and his mercy, as it were, present to our souls, by the fullest and brightest conceptions we can form, when we come to worship before him, when we address him with prayer for any blessing that we want, or when we praise him for any mercies that we have received from him?

3. Ought not this knowledge, this holy remembrance of God, to influence the other powers of our nature? Doth not conscience itself tell the deist, that his own sentiments of so glorious a Being demand his highest honor, and his humblest worship? Do not his own thoughts require of him a behavior agreeable to all those high conceptions which he hath of the perfections of the divine nature? Are not our minds bound to think of him with high esteem? Are not our wills bound to resolve upon obedience to this wise and holy Governor, and to submit with patience to all his providences? Are not our eyes made to contemplate his works, and ought we not to give him the honor of his wisdom and power, that formed this world of wonders which our eyes behold: And are not our tongues obliged to speak honorably of him, and to render him a just revenue of praise? Is it not our duty to offer the tribute of our lips in thankfulness for a thousand blessings we receive from his bounty and beneficence?

4. Are not our passions or affections a particular power of human nature that owes God some honor, as well as the understanding or

will, the eyes and the tongue? Were not these affectionate powers made to be excited by thoughts of the mind, and to be exercised agreeably to the judgment and conscience? Or are the passions the only powers of our nature that owe no homage to the God that made them, and must not be employed in his service? Many of the affections are pleasing to nature in their various exercises, and can they not have leave to be employed in piety? Must religion be made so dry and tasteless and melancholy a thing as to forbid all pleasure? Have we not permission to love God, the most amiable Spirit, whose perfections and glories surpass all created beings? Must we never take delight in God, the Author of our nature, and the source of eternal blessedness? Is religion the only thing whence all pleasing affection must be for ever banished and excluded? And must I withhold all these pleasant and powerful sensations of nature from intermingling with the things of God? Hath my wise and merciful Creator given me such a faculty as admiration, and may I admire the heavens and the earth, the fishes, the beasts, and the birds, and not admire that all-wise and almighty Being that made me and them? May I lay out my wonder on any thing or on every thing besides the great God who created all these wonders? Hath he formed my soul to delight and love, and hath he confined these sweet and pleasurable capacities only to be employed about creatures, when the Creator himself is infinite and supreme in loveliness? Will not this most amiable of Beings expect that I should love himself, and give me leave to make him my delight? Is it lawful for me to fear a lion or an adder, a whirlwind or a flash of lightning, and may I not indulge a holy and solemn dread of that glorious Being that made lightnings and whirlwinds, adders and lions, and has unknown thunders in reserve for profane sinners? Doth he give me leave to mourn and weep for the loss of my ease, or my health, or my friends, and may I never indulge my sorrow to arise for all my multiplied offences against his law, my former rebellions against his government, and my refusals of his grace? Thus far I have begged leave for the passions to assist religion, and I think reason gives an ample permission. But I may rise to bolder language here, and pronounce my argument with stronger force, if I should resume the first part of this head of reasoning, and make all these enquiries turn upon the point of obligation and duty. Since I know this God to be infinite in goodness, and the author of all my comforts, am I not bound to love him with all my strength, and with all my soul? If he is a Being of sovereign power, holiness and justice, ought I not always *to fear before him*, and to grieve

heartily that I have offended against his holy laws? Is it not my duty to mourn for sin, and to be ashamed of my unnatural and unreasonable conduct? And doth not God require that I should rejoice before him with thankfulness, when I have some hope that he hath accepted my submission, pardoned my sin, and holds me in his favor and love?

But let me proceed yet farther in this argument, and say, have not my passions themselves been too often engaged in folly and sin? And must they do nothing for the interests of religion and virtue? Hath not the great and blessed God been affronted and dishonored by these warm and active powers of my nature? And may not he make some reprisals on them, by leading them captive by his grace, and devoting them to his own service? Must the passions, which have been defiled with so much iniquity, and which have helped to defile the soul, never be refined? Never be sanctified? Never attempt to restore that tribute of honor and obedience to the great God, of which they have long defrauded him? Have I loved vanity? Have I delighted in sin? Has my desire, my hope and my joy, been heretofore employed on criminal objects? And must these affections of desire and hope, of love and delight, be forbid to pursue objects divine and heavenly, and be for ever excluded from all pious employment? Have I grieved for the loss of a sinful pleasure, or *been angry with my brother*, and hated him *without a cause*? And ought I not to turn the stream of my wrath and hatred against my sins, and to give a loose to the passion of grief and pious sorrow for my guilty behavior toward God and man? Are these faculties of my nature capable of sinning only, and incapable of practising virtue and goodness? Or is it not lawful to attempt to employ them in the service of religion? Let the deists, and the men of cold philosophy, tell me, that virtue and piety, and goodness, consist only in sublime ideas of God, and in a will devoted to him; and that it is only the pure affections of the mind or spirit that are to be exercised toward God and religion; but the motions of flesh and blood must have nothing to do here, nor passions of the animal have any part or share in the religion of the man. To such objectors I would reply thus:

5. Is it possible that the purest affections can be exerted in any vigorous efforts in our present state of mortality, but flesh and blood will feel and follow them a little? Can these sublime ideas of the blessed God, and these pure and spiritual affections, be raised to any high degree, but the powers and passions of animal nature will be suitably touched and moved, at least in some degree, according to the natural temper? All persons are not equally capable of

warm affection, and vigorous ferments of blood; But there is not a son or daughter of Adam without some degree of these natural emotions. They have been felt by wise and holy men, that have lived in all ages of the world; and it must be so, in some measure, while we are such a composition of flesh and spirit.

I grant, indeed, that some such cold and indifferent worshippers as can make this objection, whose religion consists only in a philosophical thought of the great God, and a devout wish perhaps once in a week or two, may not feel any of these sensible effects in animal nature. Those also may be excepted who are brought up in a mere round of forms, and never say their prayeres but at the sound of a bell and a public hour; I except also those popish devotees, who mutter over their Latin service, their "paternosters" and "ave marias" by tale, and drop their beads to count their prayers right, and to secure themselves from mistaking the number. All these sorts of worshippers may join in the same opinion, and renounce their affections in their religion, and that for this reason, because they have not religion enough to employ them. But where a constant and supreme love to God is the real spring that moves us to our duties, the rest of the natural passions will have some correspondent share in the work. And it is a very false way of judging for these kinds of people, to compare all men with themselves, and make their cold indifference and their lazy practice the standing model of the religion of all mankind.

Let us suppose for once, that we were confined to the mere religion of nature; hath it not been sufficiently proved, that reason and the light of nature provide for the passions some share of employment, even in natural religion? And it is to be feared, that it is not merely the unbelief of Christianity, but the want of serious inward religion of any kind, that inclines the infidels of our age to oppose and ridicule the exercise of devout affection. Is not the book of Psalms a noble and sublime collection of lyric poesy? Are not several parts of these sacred odes confined to such notions and practices in religion, as the light of nature and reason dictates? Now if these persons had true piety at heart, one would think they should rejoice in these sprightly and pious composures, and use them as a help to raise their souls to God, their Creator, in love and praise. Will they make this excuse, that the language is too warm, too much animated and pathetic, that there is too much of the beauty of metaphor, too many bright images that strike powerfully upon the passions, whereas the religion of nature, in their opinion is a more calm and sedate thing? Surely it is much to be feared and suspected, that their prayers and their praises, and all

their pretences to piety, will go but a little way to raise their souls to heaven, when their modes of worship cannot bear the language of such devout affection, and admit of no elevations above calm ideas and sedate indolence. But I return to my vindication of the affectionate Christian, in his warmest exercises of devout passion.

I might proceed much further on this point, and say, when the affections are impressed and awakened to a powerful exercise by divine truths will not these lively powers have a farther and a reflexive influence on the mind and the will? Do they not sensibly impress the ideas of divine things with much stronger force on the mind? Do they not set all the affairs of religion in a more lovely and attractive light? Do they not confirm the will in all its holy resolutions for God and heaven? Have they not often been found to stamp divine things on the memory and conscience with more lasting efficacy? Do not the devout passions awaken the latent images of fancy, and dress all the chambers of the soul with divine ideas and ornaments? And have they not by this means assisted the soul to maintain its constant converse with heaven? Is it not in the power of the sacred passions to raise and brighten the language of the tongue, as well as command the tears of the eyelids and the smiles of the countenance? Are not our hope and our fear given us to be living spurs to duty, and wakeful guards against temptation and disobedience; and do they not often employ the hands and the feet, direct the eyes, and awaken the voice? Will not holy love and joy give a lively and pleasing motion to the blood and spirits? And the hope of having sin forgiven, and our souls made for ever happy, excite a thousand pleasures in human nature? Will it not fill the soul with overflowings of gratitude, and make the lips abound in expressions of joy and praise? And will not these be attended with a peaceful and pleasing aspect, and establish a sweet serenity in the heart and eyes? And all concur to maintain religion in the power and the joy of it?

Christians, be not afraid of professing the pleasures of religion! These men of pretended reason are vanquished at their own weapons, when they dare deride your converse with God, and fight against the inward power of your devotions. Be ye convinced therefore, and be established in this truth, that it is not the warmest exercise of our affections that can be ridiculous in religion, when they are excited by a just apprehension of divine things: But then it is, the passions are justly censured, when they are indulged to raptures in the confusion and darkness of the mind; when they flutter and make a tumult in the twilight of the understanding, or when they are raised high by mere enthusiasm and the visions of fancy,

without the solid foundation of knowledge and judgment to support them, as I have shewn in a foregoing discourse.

*Give diligence, therefore, O my friends, to improve in the knowledge of God the Father, and in the gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ!* Maintain your humble converse with heaven, labor and strive in meditation and prayer, till you get near the seat of God, and find sweet access to his throne, through the blood of Christ and the aids of the blessed Spirit: Awaken all the springs of holy love and divine joy. These sacred pleasures will animate you to every duty, will be a guard to your souls against temptation, and give you courage to stand the ridicule of an unbelieving age: These divine refreshments, like the heavenly manna, will support your spirits through all the wilderness, and make your travels easy and delightful. These will lead you on with joy to *the promised land*, and prepare you to *dwell for ever* with that God, with whom you have here enjoyed so long and blessed a correspondence.—We proceed now to the sixth general.

Since it appears to be a matter of such importance to have the affections engaged in the affairs of religion, some humble and sincere souls may be ready to pronounce hard things concerning themselves, and conclude they have no true religion, because they feel their affections but little moved: We proposed, therefore, that the sixth general head of discourse should offer some “consolations to such honest and humble Christians, who endeavor to *love* and serve *the Lord their God* with all their powers, but find very little of this exercise of the pious passions in comparison with what others feel.” Let me address such persons as these in the following manner:

I. Since you doubt whether you *love God with all your heart*, that is, with your warmest affections, “search and enquire with holy fear, and with the greater diligence, whether you *love him with all your mind, with all your soul, and with all your strength.*” Do you *love him with all your mind?* Have you the highest esteem of him in your judgment as the most excellent and best of Beings, and as your only sufficient good? Do you *love him with all your soul?* Have you chosen him for your eternal portion both in this world and that which is to come? Is your will firmly resolved for God and religion? Are you sincerely willing to forsake every sin and to return to God, to give up yourself to him as your Lord and Ruler, and receive him as your God and reconciled Father, according to the discoveries of his grace in Christ Jesus? Do you love him with all your strength? Do you desire to obey and serve him all your days? Do you worship him with holy diligence, and promote his honor in the world, according to the utmost of your capacity?

If you find these things wrought in you, and done by you, you have abundant reason to take comfort in this evidence of your Christianity. Where the mind and will are sincerely engaged on the side of God and religion in this manner, the love of the heart is not utterly wanting; the affections must be in some measure sanctified, though perhaps you may not feel so frequent, so powerful, and so lively an exercise of them as other Christians may enjoy. These things are a better proof of true faith and real piety, than a sudden flash of affection can be, where these more steady operations of the mind and will are wanting.

II. Though all the sons and daughters of Adam have some degrees of passion in their very frame and nature, yet remember that the temper of all men is not equally affectionate. Consider now and enquire, whether your temper has so much of these affectionate principles wrought in it as some of your neighbors may possess: There are some of a much calmer and more sedate constitution; their passions of desire and joy, of fear and hope, of sorrow and anger, are seldom moved about earthly things; and then it is no wonder that they are not so sensibly impressed with things heavenly. God requires no more than he gives; where he has wrought these pathetic principles in the constitution, he requires the exercise of them in the things of religion: But where persons are of a more dispassionate and a calmer frame, there God will require less of the sensible exercises of affection in the Christian life. 2 Cor. viii, 12. *If there be a willing mind, it is accepted according to what a man has, and not according to what he has not.*

I confess, if you have warm and lively passions for all other things, and none at all for God and religion and heavenly objects; if your fear, joy, sorrow, and desire are vigorous in their emotions, and are immediately raised by the affairs and occurrences of this life, and yet lie always asleep with regard to divine things, it is a very bad sign indeed, and has a very unfavorable aspect on the case of your soul: For *where much is given, much shall be required*; Luke xiv. 48.

III. "Consider what is your present stage of life: Are you in the flower of youth, when all the powers of nature are active, when the passions are warm and lively? Or are you in the decay of nature, and on the verge of life? Is old age coming upon you, or is it already come, when the animal powers are weakened, when the operations of flesh and blood are more languid?" An old man cannot have those lively passions and appetites with regard to sensible things as belong to the years of youth, and vigor of nature. Old Barzillai could not feel his desires awakened and tempted to dwell at court

by all the dishes of a royal table, or the sprightly music, or the rich entertainments there; 2 Sam. xix. 35. And therefore it is no wonder if the devout passions be then more languid and unmoved. An aged Christian may have the most fixed resolution for God, and the firmest principles of piety rooted in his soul; he may do much service for God, and in this sense *may flourish and bring forth fruit in old age*; Psalm xcii. 14. and may have great advancements in real godliness, though there may be few such sensible evidences of it given to himself or to his neighbors, in the lively motion of his pathetic powers.

But on the other hand, it is a very sad and melancholy symptom, if the evil passions of covetousness, of anger, of revenge, of envy, reign and exert themselves with violence in old age, while there is little or nothing of warm affection exercised in the things of religion.

IV. "Let humble and sincere Christians remember also for their encouragement, that though spiritual things may be the chief object of our hope and desire, yet our passions may not always be so powerfully impressed by them, as they are by sensible and carnal things, and the reason is, because they are spiritual and invisible."

The passions which are wrought into our present frame, belong partly to animal nature as well as to the mind; and therefore the things of sense are nearer akin to them: They touch and strike our passions sooner, and awaken them to more vivacity, and engage them with more vehemence than things which are unseen. The passions are certain principles in man which depend much on flesh and blood; and therefore they are more naturally impressed by things that strike our eyes and our ears, and by them find a way to our hearts. It is possible that God and heaven may be really more beloved than men and this earth, though the animal powers of joy, hope, fear and desire, may not be so sensible and vehement in their operations toward spiritual, absent, and future objects, as towards things present and sensible. There is not therefore sufficient ground to conclude that we do not love God above creatures, because we sometimes feel the more passionate exercises and commotions of flesh and blood about creatures, than we do about God himself: And indeed were it not for this reasonable salvo, this spring of consolation, a multitude of Christians would be ready to give themselves up to despair, and I doubt there would be very few of us who would not have reason to suspect the truth and power of our inward religion.

Yet I cannot conclude without this observation: In the last place, that "what comfortable evidences soever of our love to God may be derived from the high esteem of him in our minds, and

the attachment of our wills to him, yet these evidences and comforts will be greatly brightened and increased by feeling the affectionate love of God in the heart." To love the Lord our God with all the mind, and with all the soul, and with all the strength, becomes more glorious when it influences the affectionate powers of the heart to join in the practice of religion.

It is granted, that the mere flashes of sudden passion in a devout moment, without a settled supreme esteem of God in the mind, without a firm attachment of the will to him, and careful obedience to his commands, will yield but small and feeble consolation in a time of trial and enquiry: The hearers who receive the word, like seed in stony ground, are said to receive it with joy, but their religion was but a flash; it endured but for a short season; it sprung up on a sudden and quickly withered, because it had no root in the understanding and the will; *Matt. xiii. 20, 21.* Yet it is better, infinitely better, to find and feel that we love God with all our powers; we should therefore use all proper methods to stir up our drowsy affections, and engage them in divine things, that we may live in the pleasures of godliness, as well as in the power of it, and have our hopes rising high, and approaching to the joys of heaven, while we dwell here on earth. What these proper methods are, whereby the devout passions may be raised, will be the subject of our next enquiry.

**MEDITATION.** "It is strange that any person should cavil against the exercises of the warmest affections of man in the things that relate to the great God, and in matters of our own immortal interest. It is strange to hear any dispute arise against the engagement of our strongest and most sprightly powers in the service of the best of Beings, and our eternal friend. Oh! may I know him, and love him, and fear him, and delight in him, as becomes a creature to fear and to love a God, that is, in a supreme degree. In vain shall the world assault me with their keenest reproaches, in vain shall a bautering and Godless age attempt to laugh me out of countenance for indulging the divine sensations of religion. Let them tell me, "It is mere animal nature, and the caprices of flesh and blood," let them charge me with enthusiastical folly, and feverish heats of religion, I dare pronounce boldly, in the face of ridicule and scandal, that the prudent affectionate Christian, in his devoutest hours, does nothing beneath the dignity of reason, nor unbecoming the character of the wisest of men. I have David and the prophets, I have Christ and his apostles engaged on this side of the question by their own practice, and I shall count it my honor to be an humble imitator of such blessed patterns.

"Oh! may I find the secret joys of religious retirement, joys which a stranger intermeddles not with! May I feel some pious affection animating me to all the duties of the Christian life! May I see myself rising high above earthly things with holy contempt, mounting as on eagles' wings toward heaven; and then I shall not be frightened nor discouraged at all the arrows of reproach that are shot against me. The affectionate Christian has much more reason on his side than all those indolent worshippers, those dry and joyless creatures, those cold pretenders to religion, who have renounced their affections in the things of God, and creep on at a low and grovelling rate, feeding on some natural truths and speculations without life, power, or pleasure.

"But if I find my natural temper has very little of the pathetic composition in it, and that my affections by nature are not so vigorous as those of my neighbor; if I feel the more vehement efforts of love and fear, and holy sorrow, and pious pleasure, sink and decline, through the decay of nature or growing age, I will comfort myself with this, that it is the desire of my soul to have all its powers and passions engaged for God in their most vital and active exercises.

"If at any time I am so unhappy as to feel my affections exert themselves in a more vigorous manner toward the objects of flesh and sense which are present, than they do toward things absent, divine and heavenly, I would mourn over the frailty of human nature, in this present state, where we are so much attached to the things of this body. I will endeavor through divine grace *to love the Lord my God with all my mind, and with all my soul*, to raise him higher in the esteem of my judgment, and to cleave to him more firmly by a resolute bent of my will, to abide daily with him, and live upon him, as my all-sufficient and everlasting good, that I may attain some comfortable establishment in the hope of his love: And when my flesh and heart, and all my animal powers shall fail me, I may still rejoice in having God for my God, who will be the strength of my heart, the life of my spirit, and my portion for ever;" *Psalm lxxiii. 26. Amen.*

## DISCOURSE VII.

### MEANS OF EXCITING THE DEVOUT AFFECTIONS.

WE are now come to the last thing designed in these discourses, and that is to propose a “few proper methods, whereby the affections of nature may be awakened and employed in the Christian life.” Take them in the following order :

I. See to it that the leading and ruling faculties of the soul, *viz.* the understanding and the will, be deeply and firmly engaged in religion. Let the mind be well furnished with divine knowledge, and the will be as resolutely bent for God and heaven. Where the understanding has but a poor and scanty furniture of the things of God, the pious affections will have the fewer springs to raise them : And if our ideas of divine things are obscure and confused, our passions are in great danger of running wildly astray, and of being led away by every delusion. Seek therefore not only a large and plenteous acquaintance with the things of God, but endeavor, as far as possible, to get clear and distinct conceptions of them, that the pious passions may have solid ground whence to take their rise. And then let your will be steadily set for God without weakness or wavering. If the resolves and purposes of the heart be feeble and doubtful, the affections will never rise to any high degree in a regular or lasting manner.

But I have said so much on these points that I shall not enlarge here. If the mind and will are sanctified, it is certain, according to the very frame of our natures, that the passions will in some degree follow the influence of these governing faculties. Why is it our passions are suddenly alarmed and so warmly influenced by the things of this world ? It is because our minds have too high a value for them, our wills are too much attached to them, we place our happiness too much in them ; *Matt. vi. 21. Where the treasure is, the heart will be also* ; the heart with all its passions. Why are our desires, our longings, our fears and hopes, our sorrows, joys, and resentments, so keen, and so intense about the things of life ? It is because these things are too much esteemed as our treasure, our portion, our inheritance. If God be our portion, Christ our life, and heaven our inheritance and our home, then *our affections*

*will be set on the things that are above, where Christ is at the right hand of God ; Col. iii. 1, 2.*

II. "Engage the most powerful and governing passion for God, that is, the passion of love :" All the train of affections will obey its ruling power and influence, they will all follow its motions and sovereign dictates, as was made evident in the second discourse on this subject. And we have shewn you before, that in order to excite divine love in our hearts, we must meditate frequently on these things, *viz.* what the great and blessed God is in himself, what he has done for us, what he daily does for us, and what he has promised to do, both in this life and the life to come. Never be easy, or at rest, therefore, if you find your love to God flag and languish, for then the other affections will grow cold and lifeless in religion. Take all opportunities to warm your heart with this sacred passion, and to rekindle the fire of divine love within you, when at any time you find it declining.

III. "Watch carefully against the too strong attachment of your affections to creatures :" Remember that this *world is at enmity with God* ; James iv. 4. *If any man love this world, the love of the Father is not in him* ; 1 John ii. 15. Where the love of the world is habitually prevalent, the love of God is not found ; for God is the supreme good, and the most lovely of beings, and he counts that love as nothing which is not supreme. *No man can serve two masters.* *You cannot serve God and mammon* ; Matt. vi. 25, that is, the true God and the god of riches : And we may say, by the same rule, you cannot love the true God and the god of honor and ambition, or the god of sensuality and carnal pleasure. A God carries a supreme idea, and demands all the soul. Not only unlawful objects and sinful pleasures, but even sensible delights, possessions, and enjoyments, which are lawful, take too fast hold on the heart, and draw it away from God. Remember that the creatures around you have this advantage, that while God is a spirit, an unseen being, the creatures are ever striking upon our eyes or ears ; they are ever making their court to our senses and appetites, and have a thousand ways to insinuate themselves into the heart. The world, and the flattering enjoyments of it, are suited to work upon flesh and blood, and to draw off the soul from God its centre and its rest : They are ever near at hand on all occasions, and they are ready sometimes to say, *Where is your God?* Keep your God, therefore, always near you, and watch against the pleasing flattery of alluring creatures, lest your heart cleave too fast to them, and be thereby divided from your God.

Amidst all the endearing relations and engaging businesses of

life, singe yourselves as much as possible for God, and let not many things dwell too near your soul, lest you lose the sight of your heavenly Father, and the pleasing sensations of his love. Where the love of sensible things prevails, it draws with it all the long train of hopes and fears, of desires, joys, and sorrows! of painful heartaches, and fond wishes, and keen resentments. Thus the affectionate powers of nature are carnalized, are tinctured deep with the things of earth, and become too much estranged from God and heaven. Whensoever you find a tempting creature taking too fast hold of your passions, set a guard of sacred jealousy upon it; keep your heart at a holy distance from that creature, lest it twine about your inmost powers, and draw them off from their allegiance and duty to God your Creator. The love of God is a flower of divine original, and of the growth of paradise; if the Holy Spirit has planted it in your heart, let not any other love be planted too near it, nor too much nourished, lest it draw away the vital moisture, and cause the love of God to languish and wither.

IV. Be not slight and careless in secret religion. Let private devotion, reading, meditation, prayer, have a proper share of your time allotted them. In pious retirements you may indulge all the holy passions with much greater freedom: You may there give a loose to all the devout affections of the soul, in the warmest exercises and expressions: You may say a thousand things to God in secret, which are not proper for public worship: You may pour out your souls before him in the strongest and most pathetic sentiments of holy desire and divine joy: You may tell him all the inward pains of your conscience, the secret anguish and shame of your heart, because of your past offences: You may sigh deeply, and blush before him, and dissolve your eyes into tears: You may tell him in secret how intense are your desires to taste and be assured of his love, and to be formed after his image: You may rejoice in his sight with pious exultations and triumph, in hope of his eternal presence in the upper world. Such exercises as these will keep all the passions in an habitual practice of religion, and maintain inward piety in the life and power of it.

V. Converse much with those parts of our holy religion, and with those books of Scripture which are suited to awaken your warmest affections. Let your thoughts take occasion, from the various occurrences in nature and providence, to meditate on the glorious perfections of God, the wonders of his wisdom in contriving the several parts of the creation, so happily fitted to answer his great designs. Think on his amazing power, that could form all things by his word, and bring a whole world into being at his will.

Awaken your souls, to admire the wide-spreading influence of his sovereignty and government, who manages the immense affairs of the upper and the lower worlds, the nations of men, and the armies of angels, and yet extends his care to every one of us in particular, and even to the meaner figures of flies and worms. Think on the infinite extent of his knowledge, that he is acquainted not only with every creature he has made, but with every thought that passes through our hearts, with all our most secret actions and purposes. This will awaken in you a holy fear of his majesty, and you will dread the thoughts of sinning against him, since it never can be concealed from his notice ; and while you think on his omnipresence, you may rejoice in him as your guardian and defence through all times and places where or whensoever it is possible for danger to attend you. Meditate on his boundless goodness : Our *God is love*, and all nature is filled with the blessings of his bounty. He has overspread the skies with light, and covered the earth with food for man and beast. Of what a vast and surprising extent is the whole family of creatures which are maintained out of the stores of God ! What a transcendent veneration should we have of that goodness which satisfies the craving appetites of millions daily and hourly !

Besides these general effects of the divine goodness, it is proper to have the memory furnished with particular instances of protections, deliverances, escapes from danger, rich and unmerited blessings, which we ourselves have enjoyed, that we may awaken our gratitude, rekindle our dying love, and exalt our hearts and our voices in praise. Nor is it less useful to meditate sometimes on the sins and follies of mankind, that we may admire the patience of a God so affronted and so abused : Nor is it less needful to recollect our own follies and our guilt, that we may keep holy repentance in its lively exercises ; for the spring of godly sorrow should never be dried up while we dwell in these regions of sin and defilement. Then the astonishing designs of divine mercy towards guilty creatures call for a due share of our meditations : Designs of mercy in the heart of God, counsels of peace transacted with his Son Jesus Christ *before the world began*, in order to rescue mankind from the ruins of nature, and to raise up a chosen seed for his own glory out of the rebellious race of Adam.

Here the thoughts of a Christian should spread themselves abroad, and give a loose to holy contemplation and wonder. Let us run back to ancient ages, and view Jesus the Son of God, *the brightness of his Father's glory*, in his pre-existent state of light and happiness, before he visited us in flesh ; *Heb. i. 3.* There he

dwell in the *bosom of the Father*, before he made our world, or appeared in it: We should trace his various appearances to the patriarchs, and his conduct of the church through many ages, under the name of *the angel of God's presence*, under the character of *the King of Israel*: We should meditate on his wondrous condescensions to become incarnate, to dwell in such feeble flesh and blood as ours is, to be compassed about with infirmities, to sustain perpetual labors and sorrows, fatigues and reproaches, through the course of a mortal life, to bear those unknown agonies in the garden, and on the cross, which were the price of our pardon, and the means of his atonement for our guilt. What amazing love is this! How divine! How unsearchable! It has *heights and lengths, and breadths and depths in it, that pass all our knowledge*; Eph. iii. 18, 19. and demand our devoutest praises. Trace him from the cross to the tomb, follow him through the regions of the dead, behold him in the power and glory of his resurrection, see him ascending on a bright cloud to heaven, attended with *the chariots of God*, which are *twenty thousand, even unnumbered thousands of angels*; Psalm lxviii. 18, view him *sitting on the right hand of God*, making intercession there for sinners, rebels, enemies, that they may be divinely transformed into saints, children, friends. Survey him at the head of all *principalities and powers*, ruling all things according to his Father's decrees, for the glory of his Father, and for his own glory, as well as for the eternal welfare of his church. What bright and vigorous contemplations, what entertaining ideas, what efforts of pious passion may be raised by a sanctified mind travelling such a spacious round of divine wonders!

Enter into yourselves, think what once you were, corrupt, abominable, unclean, unholy: Remember the distinguishing grace of God, whereby you were awakened to a sense of your sin and danger, and were taught to fly for refuge to Jesus, your all-sufficient hope. Think on your iniquities all pardoned; think of your garments and soul washed white in the blood of the Lamb; think on the powerful influences of the Spirit, that hath changed your vile nature, and made it holy, that has guarded you from a thousand temptations, and is training you up to everlasting blessedness. Which of the passions is there that would lie cold and silent under the lively sentiments of such a various and important scene of things?

But I proceed to the second part of this fifth direction, and that is, "we may have our devout passions quickened by converse with those parts of the Holy Bible which contain the most affecting subjects, and express them in the most pathetic manner." Read some

of the wonders of mercy and love in the transactions of God with his ancient people, how he rescued them from the midst of barbarous nations and hostile armies ; how he brought them out of bondage and brick-kilns, by a mighty and miraculous effort of power and grace ; how he led them through seas dry-shod, and commanded rivers to cleave asunder, and leave a path for their march ; how he visited them after by missionary angels, and sometimes in his own royal person ; for *they saw the God of Israel* ; Exod. xxiv. 10. Read and meditate the vengeance and the terrible destruction executed on the old world that was drowned in the flood ; the deluge of wrath that fell on Sodom and Gomorrah, which perished by divine lightning ; for *the Lord rained down fire and brimstone from the Lord out of heaven upon them* ; Gen. xix. 24. Read the ten plagues of Egypt, and the desolations that were sometimes spread over rebellious Israel, and sometimes over the heathen nations by an angry God, in the writings of Moses, and the Book of Judges. Read the soft and melting language of divine mercy, inviting sinners to return to God by Isaiah, the evangelic prophet. Survey the promises that are big with blessings, that contain pardon, and righteousness, and grace, and life, and salvation, and glory in them ; and let the pious affections of hope and love break out and diffuse themselves with sweet delight. Read the history of the life and death of our blessed Lord, which is made up of love and wonders, and look into some of the more affectionate paragraphs of St. Paul, and the pathetic parts of all the sacred epistles.

But above all, for this purpose, I must recommend the specimens of divine meditation and divine worship, the complaints, the supplications, and the songs of praise which are offered to God by holy men in the Old Testament and in the New. You find some of these in the books of Moses, Ezra, Job, Daniel, and other prophets ; especially the Psalms of David : A rich and heavenly treasure is this ; a repository, or an altar of sacred fire. The people of God, in all succeeding ages, have had recourse to it, both as an example and a spring of most lively and exalted devotions. Choose a psalm suited to your own case, and frame, and temper ; compare your hearts with the Psalmist, and your circumstances with his ; lift up your souls to God in the words of David, or imitate his language where his words do not so perfectly express your case. Enter into his spirit, form and model your pious affections by that illustrious pattern, and be sure to bring Christ and the sweet discoveries of grace, and the blessings of the gospel, into this sort of devotion. David himself, under the influence of the Holy Spirit, practised this, though in a more obscure manner, and in the style of pro-

phecy: And in the midst of such a dark dispensation, surrounded with types and shadows, we find surprising efforts of fear and love, of joy and wonder, of desire and hope, of faith and adoration, and praise, how unspeakably glorious and entertaining would it be to us, if we had a book of such holy melody, such harmonious worship, written by divine influence in the language of Christ and his gospel, interlined with the blood of the Son of God, adorned and enlivened with the grace and glory of a rising and reigning Saviour, and animated and enriched with the Holy Spirit, and the blessings of the New Testament? Perhaps this is too sublime a privilege, too high a favor for the church to expect or enjoy in this corrupted and degenerate state: Perhaps we must wait for such a seraphic volume till we are raised to join the songs and harps of the heavenly Jerusalem; or at least till the happy *time of the restitution of all things*, when *a new heaven and a new earth* shall introduce such a state of things among men as shall be near akin to the glory of the upper world.

But it is time now to go on to the next particular.

VI. "When you find a devout passion arising in your heart, indulge and cherish it, if there be a convenient season." Take heed that you do not banish the holy thought, or suppress the sacred affection. Do not immediately plunge yourself, without necessity, into the businesses of life, or any vain amusements, lest you damp the wing of your holy desires, which would bear you upward to God; *quench not* those seeds of divine and heavenly fire which God has kindled in your souls. When the quickening Spirit takes hold of your heart, take care that you do not refuse to follow him: Resist not the motions of the blessed Spirit, lest he retire grieved, and it may be long ere he return; *1 Thess. v. 19. Eph. iv. 30.* When the blessed God, does, as it were, take you by the hand, and lead you aside from the world, to converse with himself; when your blessed Saviour doth, if I may so express, touch the springs of devotion within you, and as it were invite and beckon you to holy fellowship with him, have a care that you do not turn rudely away from him, and renounce his invitations. Let such sacred seasons, such heavenly moments, be duly valued and improved. Let pious affections be indulged and promoted, unless plain and necessary business call you away at that time to other engagements.

But if it should happen that the providence of God and your duty demand your thoughts and your hands to be employed in secular affairs, when you feel a devout passion arising, you may in some measure remedy this inconvenience, by the following advice:

VII. "Endeavor to keep up a constant savor of religion in the midst of the businesses and cares of this life." While you are travelling through the wilderness of this world, walk always with God : *Do every thing in the name of God*, as under the influence of his command, and with a design for his glory : And let your soul go forth often toward him in short and holy exercises ; this will keep the devout affections awake and active. If you have found God in the closet, or in the church, carry him with you into the things of the world, into the shop and the family, so far as a proper attention to your daily business will permit. Suffer no long intermissions of your heavenly work, lest your pious affections grow cold. Let your thoughts in short intervals of worship go out toward God. Never let an hour pass, if possible, without some devout aspirations toward heaven. In the evening watches, at midnight, and at the dawn of the morning, the holy Psalmist sent up his thoughts to God ; and he was often breathing out his soul toward him amidst the affairs of the day ; *Psalm Ixiii. 6. I will meditate on thee in the night watches.* Psalm xxv. 5. *Thou art the God of my salvation, on thee do I wait all the day.* O blessed souls, who imitate the practice of that sublime saint, the *man after God's own heart !*

VIII. "Confine not your religion always to your thoughts." Sometimes, perhaps, *while you are musing, the fire will burn*, as David found it ; *Psalm xxxix. 3. Then speak with your tongue* to God, or to man, as David did, who was most exquisitely skilled in all the holy methods of a devout life, and was the noblest pattern of sacred fervor. Gain some acquaintance with lively Christians : Mutual conversation shall raise the divine flame higher, like united torches which increase each other's blaze. Sharpen your desires, and kindle your hopes and joys, by mutual and holy discourse. Borrow a coal from the altar of the sanctuary, from the ordinances of public worship, and warm your own hearts, by endeavoring to warm the heart of your neighbor. Speak to one another of the heavenly world, till each of you find your wings stretched for the flight, and you long for the divine summons. Mix your flames of celestial love, as angels do, and let them spire upward, and point towards Jesus, your beloved. Man is a social creature and his passions were made to be raised by converse. Break therefore through the reproach and shame of a degenerate age, and aspire to the life and discourse, and joy of angels.

IX. "Seek earnestly the influences of the quickening Spirit." *Without him you can do nothing.* It is the Spirit of God who raises dead sinners at first into a divine life, and he puts all the

languid springs of life into new motion. Those vigorous and active powers of the soul, which have so strong an influence to promote the vivacity and beauty of true religion, are under his government, and they want a divine touch from his finger to quicken and accelerate their motions. It is he who awakens our fear, who excites our hopes, who kindles our love and desire to things holy and heavenly; and it is he who exalts our spiritual joys. How often does the pious Psalmist cry out for quickening grace in the cxix. Psalm, and for the continued influences of the Holy Spirit, in other parts of his devotional writings? The whole church prays for the same quickening operations, Psalm lxxx. 11. *Quicken us, O Lord, so will we call upon thee.* Let this be the matter of our daily and importunate requests to heaven. And let us remember too, that under the gospel, Christ is the spring of our life; he is appointed by the Father to bestow his Spirit: He himself is called our life; *Col. iii. 3.* He himself is a quickening Spirit; *1 Cor. xv. 45.* All the principles of our holiness must be derived from him, as our head of vital influence.

X. The last thing I shall propose, in order to keep the devout passions awake and lively in religion, is to live much in the faith of unseen things, and to *daily die*. Set yourselves continually as on the borders of the grave and the invisible world: This was St. Paul's practice; *1 Cor. xv. 31.* *I protest by our\* rejoicing which I have in Christ Jesus, our Lord, I die daily:* And his daily living in the views of death, had a happy influence to maintain his rejoicing in Christ. If you constantly look on yourselves as dying creatures, and place yourselves on the borders of eternity, you will then take leave daily of sensible things, and live by the faith of things invisible. You will then behold God as ever near you, God, the Judge of all, the everlasting hope and the portion of his saints: You will be very unwilling to have your heart absent from God, while you look at death as just at hand.

Then the blessed Jesus, both as a Saviour and as a Judge, will be much on your thoughts. "Am I ready to appear before my Judge? Have I any strong and secure evidences that Jesus is my Saviour?" Then the gates of heaven will be ever as it were open before you, and the glories of it always within your view: You will think much of the heavenly world, with all its holy inhabitants, with its divine enjoyments, with its everlasting freedom from temptation,

\* Most of the Greek copies, as well as our own translation, read it *your rejoicing*; but it is hard to make sense of it, without changing the word *your* into *our*, which in the Greek is but the small change of one letter; and one or more manuscript copies have the word *our*, and support this alteration.

and sin, and sorrow, with its delightful business, and its unknown pleasures.

Then this world will be as a dead thing in your eyes ; it will have very little power to work on your passions, and to draw you aside from God : He will be your love and your all. The strength of faith and the views of death will command your fears, and hopes, and desires, and confine them to the things of religion. Then you will be ever solicitous to brighten your evidences for heaven, to keep your hopes firm and unshaken, by often reviewing the grounds and foundations of them : And your spirit will be solicitous to be found ready at all hours for the call and summons into the upper world. Every power of nature, and every passion will be kept in its right frame and posture, under the influence of such an expectation. You will hate every sin, and abhor the thoughts of it, lest your souls be defiled afresh, when they are just called to depart : You will keep your desires of God always warm, and set a guard on your love, lest it suffer and decay : You will raise your thoughts to a continual delightful converse with heavenly things, and enter into the spirit of joy and praise. O blessed souls, who daily practise this sort of departure from the body, and anticipate the pleasures of the heavenly state ! Who love the blessed God, and delight in him here on earth, as far as mortality will admit, and are breathing after the more consummate holiness and joy of paradise ! This was the frame and temper, this the devout language of Armelle Nicholas, a poor servant maid, who had spent more than thirty years of her life in the constant exercise of divine love. "God has sent me," says she, "into this world but to love himself, and through his great mercy I have loved him so much, that I cannot love him more, after the manner of mortals : I must go to him that I may love him after the manner of the blessed."

MEDITATION. "I have learned so much of religion, as to know that it does not consist in vehement commotions of animal nature, in sublime raptures and ecstasies : We may be sincere Christians in the exercises of repentance and faith, and in the practice of holy obedience, without any overwhelming sorrows or transporting joys. Yet since the various affections of fear and hope, love and sorrow, desire and delight, belong to my nature, I am sure they ought to be all engaged in some measure in the service of God and religion : And I have been taught in this discourse by what methods it may be obtained. Let me now recollect these advices briefly, in order to practise."

And first, "I will endeavor that the ruling powers of my soul, the understanding and the will, be employed in these affairs of everlasting importance. O may my memory be richly furnished with

treasures of divine knowledge; may I be fully convinced of the necessity and worth of true religion! May I have the most exalted esteem of God and things heavenly! May these be the objects of my dearest choice! May my will be firmly determined to fix on these as my highest portion, and my everlasting all! And can I go thus far without making God the supreme object of my love? Can I choose him with all his excellencies, his graces, and his glories, as my all-sufficient happiness, and live upon him as such, and yet not love him? I think this is impossible. Let me then cherish and improve this divine principle of love; and divine love will govern all the other passions of nature, will employ them in their proper work, and distribute to them their several offices in the religious life. Love is the sovereign and commanding passion. But what shall I do, O Lord, to love thee more? How shall I kindle this divine flame? How shall I nourish it and raise it high? I meditate on the wonders of thy nature, the extent of thy goodness, and the riches of thy mercy, and yet how little do I love thee! I review the sweet variety of blessings that I have received from thy hand in this life, and the surprising transactions of thy condescending grace, which relate to the life to come, ‘and yet how little do I love thee?’ I behold Jesus thy Son sent out of thy own bosom to take flesh and blood, and to dwell among sinners, even Jesus, the Son of thy highest love, sent down to earth to be made a sacrifice, and to die for the sake of such guilty wretches as I am, an amazing instance of thy love to us, ‘and yet how little do I love thee?’ I read in thy word what thou hast done for me in ancient times and ages, long before I was born; and what thou wilt do for me in worlds and ages beyond death and time, and yet I am ashamed to think ‘how little I love thee!’ My thoughts run from one eternity to another, and trace the various and transcendent wonders of thy love in the several periods of time; glorious and astonishing instances of the compassion of a God to a worthless creature, to a worm, to a dust, an atom of being, yea worse, to a sinner, a rebel that deserves thy immortal hatred, ‘and yet how little do I love thee?’ I wander in meditation through the various fields of nature and grace, and methinks I see my God in all of them, diffusing the unbounded riches of his wisdom and love through them all: I endeavor to take my warmest passions with me, while I rove among the unknown scenes of thy power and goodness, and yet, O my God, after all, I am forced to confess, ‘how exceeding little it is that I love thee?’ Lord, it is thy own work to turn a heart of stone into flesh, to make it feel all the tender impressions of divine love, and to kindle the celestial principle of life and love within me. Come down from on high, thou Sovereign of

all Nature ; come down into my heart, take possession of it for thyself, and let it ever burn and breathe towards thee, and send up the perpetual incense of holy desire and love.

"I will set a watch upon my eyes and my ears, and all the avenues of sense and appetite, that the creatures may not enter in too far, and dwell too near my heart, which I have given up to God. I would place a sacred guard upon it, to keep off every rival. I know the danger that arises from flattering objects of flesh and sense : If they but once gain admittance into the heart, they are ever busy to take too fast hold there. Many of the weeds of this wilderness have gay and flattering blossoms, and if once they are permitted to creep into the soul, they twine about every passion, and root themselves there, to the certain prejudice of divine love. Alas, for that holy plant ! That flower of heavenly original ! How the noxious weeds of this world choak its growth, and cause it to decay and languish ! Oh ! may all the tempting trifles and vain delights of this life stand aloof from my heart, for I have devoted it to God for a habitation. Keep your distance, ye dangerous creatures, from the gates of this temple where my God dwells. There let him dwell alone, and reign over all my powers for ever.

"I would seek after my God in his public ordinances ; I would seek after him daily in my secret retirements ; I would give my pious passions a greater loose where no eye beholds me, where no ear can take notice of me. Oh ! may these retiring hours be the special seasons for the lively exercise and the increase of my devout affections ! There I can tell my God all my heart in private groans and private rejoicings. He shall know what my sighs mean, what are my fears and my painful sorrows : There I can blush before him for my secret sins, and open the floods of holy mourning : There I can pour out into his ear my bitter complaints of the rising corruptions of my heart : I can lament over the vanity of my thoughts, and spread my unknown temptations before his eyes. I can lay myself low at his feet in the dust, and tell him with humble confusion of face and soul how much I have received from him, how much I have done against him, and how little I have loved him.

"In these secret chambers of retirement, I may join the exercises of an active faith and a cheerful hope, with the sighs and tears of penitence : There I can breathe out my most vehement desires after the presence of my God, and after the sweeter sensations of his love. *My flesh and my heart may pant and cry out after God, the living God,* and say *when shall I come and appear before him ! Psalm xlvi. 1, 2.* When shall I be made more entirely like him ? When shall these days of sin and temptation, these

tedious seasons of absence and distance from God, come to a final period, never, never to return again? The lonely and retired devotions of a Christian may lead him near the walls of paradise, and the seats of the blessed, almost within the sound of their songs and praises. In a solitary cell, in a field remote from cities and men, or in a grove, such as *Abraham planted*, we may *call upon the name of the Lord, the everlasting God*; Gen. xxi. 33. There we may send up our souls towards heaven in most pathetic breathings of love and joy: The heart and the tongue may rejoice together in God our Saviour, while none but the trees and the skies bear witness to the hidden pleasures of our religion, and the sweet sensations of a conscience at peace with God: The trees in all their lovely bloom and verdure, and the skies in a cloudless and serene season, are happy emblems of such a conscience, serene and blooming with life and glory. When the sun and daylight are withdrawn, we may talk over our hopes and our holy joys to the silence of the moon and the midnight stars: Silent are they, and secure witnesses of those divine delights, to which the noisy and the busy world are too much strangers, and which the public must not know. There we may make our boast aloud in the name of Jesus, as our Saviour and our beloved: We may reckon up before him who sees all things our fairest evidences of an interest in his love, and may glory in the hope of his salvation: Surely when all the pleasing passions of nature are excited into such a just and lively exercise on divine objects, the power and the pleasure of religion within us will acquire thereby a lasting strength.

"In order to carry on this happy work, I am directed to converse much with those parts of Christianity, which are suited to raise the most sprightly affections. I have done it, O Lord, and yet I feel my heart too little warmed and raised! But I would repeat the holy work; it is all duty, and it should be all delight: I would repeat it, till I find the sacred fire kindle and glow within. I would run over again that vast and extensive field of wonders. Again, let me survey the sublime glories of thy majesty, thy power, thy wisdom, thy goodness, all unsearchable and all infinite. I would dwell upon them till I am lost in this boundless ocean of Godhead, and swallowed up in adoration and wonder. Then would I recall my past days of life, and bring past years back to my remembrance. With a sacred solemnity would I revolve in my heart the multitude of my transgressions, and the multitude of divine mercies, till my soul be melted into repentance and love: There is an unknown pleasure in the tears of pious love and holy mourning. I would read the astonishing history of the love of Christ, and trace

the divine path of it down from his Father's bosom to his state of infancy, to the manger, and the stable at Bethlehem : I would follow this golden track of love through the weaknesses, the fatigues, and sorrows of a life of poverty and reproach : I would trace it on the midnight mountains of prayer, and through the solitary wilderness, the stage of his sore temptations : I follow the shining thread of this unwearied love, till it brought him to sustain unknown agonies in the garden, and nailed him to the cursed tree: I behold him there groaning and expiring under the weight of my sins: Amazing spectacle ! What will awaken devout passion, if such varied scenes of divine love and divine sorrow cannot do it ?

" Let me borrow those blessed patterns of warm and living devotion, which David has left us, and tune the songs of Zion to the name of Jesus : The sweetest songs, and the sweetest name will happily unite and increase the divine harmony. Oh ! when shall I feel the ardent desires, the penitent sorrows, the holy wishes, and pious elevated joys of the ancient Psalmist ? Oh ! for the return of the same Spirit that gave the soul and the harp of David, these sacred and immortal elevations. When I find a divine influence reaching my heart, and raising a devout passion there, I would hold fast and cherish the heavenly sunbeam, till I feel the holy warmth diffused through all my powers : Nor would I willingly suffer the tides of business or care in this world to quench the spark which was kindled from above. I would keep up the savor of divine things among the common affairs of this life. A present God in the midst of the labors of this world, will sweeten and sanctify them all, and bring heaven down to earth.

" Suffer me not, O my God, to bury all my religion within me. Let my tongue communicate some of the wonders of thy mercy, and be the lively instrument of thy praise : Give courage and wisdom, that I may know when and how to divert vain discourse, and may dare to speak for God. Oh ! when shall the time be, that *they which fear the Lord, shall speak often one to another?* Mal. iii. 16. and warm each other's hearts with heavenly conversation ? When shall the blessed Spirit revisit the forsaken churches, and dwell again in the degenerate families of Christians ? While we feel our hearts heavy, and our affections cold and languid in the things of God, we toil and heave in vain without this Spirit. We flutter upon the ground, and make attempts to rise heavenward : but, alas ! we grovel and groan under our impotence, till the Spirit gives us an eagle's wing to mount us up toward the heavenly world. With all our pious endeavors, let us join our efforts of importunate request for the return of the quickening Spirit, and his

vital influences. Oh ! that I might live much in the faith of unseen things, and set myself continually as on the borders of death. Turn aside the veil, O blessed Jesus, that I may look into the unseen world ! Or give the eyes of my faith vigor enough to pierce through the veil, and see my God and my Saviour. And may this blessed sight make a divine impression upon all the powers of my nature, such as may awaken every vigorous and pleasing passion of the heart, such as may engage me to keep my hopes always awake, my evidences for heaven unspotted, and my desires ever breathing toward thy presence, my Saviour, and my God ! If my pious passions were in their warmest exercise, I should be ever ready to obey the divine order for my removal hence : I should receive the messenger death with a smile on my countenance, and follow the angel with a cheerful step, while he leads me away from a world of sin, sorrow, and darkness, to the regions of life and joy.

"O happy country, where sorrow and sin have no place, where my spirit in its inmost powers shall feel an eternal spring ! While we dwell in this world, it is all winter with us : We behold the sun as afar off, and receive but feeble influences. But in the world on high, all things around us are full of life and love : There are no gloomy hours, no chilling blasts, no cold and cloudy seasons. There no damp shall hang upon the wing of my devout affections, no waters shall ever quench the fervor of them. There I shall be for ever ascending nearer to God the centre of my soul, and all my motions will be swifter too. Every power within me shall feel stronger influences of his love, when I am got so far within the divine attraction. Then I shall complain no longer of absence and distance, nor feel any more eclipse of the face of my God ; but I shall be perpetually receiving a full efflux of light and love from the eternal Sun of grace and glory. I shall spend the ages of my endless existence in a rich variety of sublime duties, and sublime delights ; such delights and such duties as are, and must be unknown, till we put off these coarse and cumberous garments of flesh and blood, these veils that enwrap our souls in darkness. Happy shall I be indeed, when all the troublesome and disquieting influences of flesh and blood shall cease : All my painful and uneasy passions shall be for ever banished : Grief, and fear, and anger, shall vex my spirit no more. Animal nature must be buried in the dust, and all the ferments and emotions of it shall cease for ever.

"But must I then lose all those kindly ferments of nature too, all those pleasing emotions, which in this present state add fresh vigor and delight to the soul in the exercise of its best affections,

love and joy? If all these must be lost, who can inform me what shall come in the room of them? Surely love and joy are immortal things; they were made for heaven, and cannot die, nor shall their vigor be diminished in a world that was built for happiness. What strange unknown powers then shall be given to separate spirits, whereby these divine affections shall be invigorated, and raised to nobler degrees of exercise? Or shall my separate spirit, when it is divested of every clog, and exulting in complete liberty, use all its own affectionate powers in a nobler and more perfect manner, when I shall see the divine objects of them face to face? Surely the holy souls that are dismissed from flesh, shall be richly furnished with all necessary faculties, for their own felicity. Every saint in glory shall find full satisfaction, and intense delight, when all its best affections are united and employed on the most lovely and desirable objects; when they are all fixed on God their supreme good, and on Jesus, the most perfect, and most divine image of the Father.

"Jesus, together with the Father, shall be the object of our contemplation and love. And at the same time his holy soul, with all its pure affections, rejoicing in its own nearness to God, shall be the pattern of our heavenly joy. *I in them, says our blessed Lord, I in them, and thou in me, that they all may be made perfect in one;* John xvii. 23. And we are told—*We shall be like him, for we shall see him as he is;* 1 John iii. 2.

"These are the sweet notices of our future felicity, that he has given us to cheer our hearts in the present state of faith and labor: These are the bright, but distant glimpses of those entertainments which are prepared for us in our Father's house. These are little prospects of those *rivers of pleasure*, that run between the hills of paradise, and *make glad* the new Jerusalem, *the city of our God*: Such joys as these await us on high. Do we not feel our hearts pant and point upward? These are the joys of divine love; the very faith and hope of this blessedness, the slight glimpses and fore-tastes of it here on earth, have something in them unspeakable and full of glory: But the complete relish and fruition of it is reserved for heaven, and for heavenly inhabitants to know and enjoy. There, and there only, are such immediate and rich profusions of divine love, as the heart of man in this mortal state, is neither pure enough to partake of, nor large enough to conceive. We must die, we must die out of this world, to learn perfectly what those pleasures are; nor can we know them but by enjoyment. Missionary angels could not make us understand them, nor a visit from departed saints. Earthly languages were not made to express the fulness of

these celestial sensations: The ideas of paradise demand *unutterable words*; nor are spirits dwelling in flesh either fit or able to hear them. We must die then, to learn how these blessed ones love God, and how God loves the blessed. Oh! when will the happy day arrive? When will the hour shine out upon us, and the bright moment appear? It is coming, it is coming, as fast as time can roll away, and the sun and moon can finish their appointed periods.

"Come, my soul, rouse thyself from thy dull and lethargic temper; shake off the dust of this earth, that hangs heavy upon thy better powers. Hast thou not been long weary of such cold and frozen devotion, as is practised in this earthly state? Hast thou not long complained of loving thy God so little, and of tasting so little of his love? Come, raise thyself above these dull and despicable scenes of flesh and sense, above all that is not immortal. Lift up thy head with cheerfulness and eager hope; look out with longing eyes, beyond the shadowy region of death, and salute the dawning of thy eternal day: Stretch out thy arms of intense desire, and send a flight of devout wishes across the dark valley, to meet the approaching joys of immortality."



# AN EXHORTATION TO MINISTERS.



## AN EXHORTATION TO MINISTERS.

WHEN true religion falls under a general and remarkable decay, it is time for all that are concerned to awaken and rouse themselves to fresh vigor and activity, in their several posts of service. If the interests of piety and virtue are things fit to be encouraged and maintained in the world, if *the kingdom of the blessed God* among men be worthy to be supported, surely it is a necessary and becoming zeal for every one who hath the honor to be a minister of this kingdom, to take alarm at the appearance of such danger; and each of us should enquire, What can I do to *strengthen the things which remain and are ready to die*, as well as to recover what is lost? Let my brethren, therefore, in the ministry, forgive me, if I presume at this season to set before them a plain and serious exhortation. It was prepared for a public solemnity, wherein an esteemed young friend and brother entered into the ministerial office; and upon this account I have used much more freedom in the language than I could ever pretend to justify on any other occasion. It was in the name of my reverend brethren then present, as well as in my own, that the exhortation addresses him in the manner following:

You have this day devoted and dedicated yourself to the service of Christ in the ministry of the gospel, and particularly for the edification of this church. Your brethren in the ministry have also done all that they can do toward the dedicating and devoting you to the same sacred service, by the various solemn transactions of the day; and now we entreat, we exhort, we charge you, *in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ*, and in the words of the great apostle, that you *take heed to the ministry which you have received in the Lord, that you fulfil it*; Col. iv. 17. While we are endeavoring to press this charge on your conscience, we would speak also, each of us, to our own souls, and renew the awful charge upon ourselves. We would call to mind our own vows and engagements this day, and revive our decaying and dying zeal in this sacred and important service. What I have to say on this subject, shall be contained under four general heads:

I. Take heed to your own personal religion, as absolutely necessary to the right discharge of the ministerial office.

II. Take heed to your private studies and preparations for public service.

III. Take heed to your public labors, and actual ministrations in the church.

IV. Take heed to your conversation in the world, and especially among the *flock of Christ over which* you preside. Bear with me while I enlarge a little upon each of these.

#### SECTION I.—OF A MINISTER'S PERSONAL RELIGION.

I. Take heed to your own personal religion, especially to the work of God in your own heart, as absolutely necessary to the right discharge of the ministerial work. Surely there is the highest obligation on a preacher of the gospel to believe and practise what he preaches. He is under the most powerful and sacred engagements to be a Christian himself, who goes forth to persuade the world to become Christians. A minister of Christ who is not a hearty believer in Christ, and a sincere follower of him, is a most shameful and inconsistent character, and forbids in practice what he recommends in words and sentences. But it is not enough for a minister to have a common degree of piety and virtue, equal to the rest of Christians; he should transcend and surpass others. The leaders and officers of the army under the blessed Jesus should be more expert in the Christian exercise, and more advanced in the holy warfare, than his fellow-soldiers are supposed to be; 2 Cor. vi. 4. *In all things approving ourselves* (saith the apostle) *as the ministers of God in much patience, etc.*, and I may add, in much of every Christian grace. A little and low degree of it is not sufficient for a minister; see therefore not only that you practice every part and instance of piety and virtue which you preach to others, but abound therein, and be eminent beyond and above the rest, as your station in the church is more exalted, and as your character demands.

The world expects more from you, your own conscience requires more of you, and Christ your Lord both requires and expects much more religion to be found in you, who are the leader, than in the rest of the flock, since your advantages are much superior to most of theirs. Your time and life are in a special manner devoted to the things of God and religion, and the heavenly world: Your particular calling as a minister is much nearer akin to your general calling as a Christian, than that of the rest of mankind; and you ought to improve it for the advancement of your Christianity. You are more disengaged from the busy cares and embarrassments

of this life than other Christians, that you may have your heart and soul more entirely employed in things that relate to the life to come.

Your daily duty calls you to be more conversant with the word of God, with the rules of piety, and the gospel of salvation : The precepts which require universal godliness, and the promises that encourage it, are better known to you, and your mind is better furnished with them, or at least it should be so. You are obliged to copy out the life of Christ more exactly, that you may be *an example to the flock* in every thing that is holy. Your temptations to a vain and worldly spirit, and a sensual temper of mind, are much fewer than those of many other men, whose hearts and hands are necessarily busied in the affairs of the world, and who are more frequently constrained into the company of sinners.

Now since your helps in the way to heaven, both as to the knowledge and practice of duty, are much greater than what others enjoy, and your obstacles and impediments are in some instances less than theirs, it will be a shameful thing in you, as it is a matter of shame to any of us, to sink below the character of other Christians in the practice of our holy religion, or even if we do not excel the most of them, since our obligations to it, as well as our advantages for it, are so much greater than others. Take heed therefore, to your own practical and vital religion, as to the truth, reality, and evidence of it, as to the liveliness and power of it, as to the growth and increase of it.

I. Take heed to your own practical religion, to the truth and reality of it, and the clear and undoubted evidence of it in your own conscience. *Give double diligence to make your calling and election sure.* See to it with earnest solicitude, that you be not mistaken in so necessary and important a concern ; for a minister who preaches up the religion of Christ, yet has no evidence of it in his own heart, will lie under vast discouragements in his work ; and if he be not a real Christian himself, he will justly fall under double damnation. Keep a constant holy jealousy over your own soul, lest *while you preach to the eternal salvation of others, yourself become a cast-away*, or disapproved of God, and for ever banished from his presence ; 1 Cor. ix. 27. Call your own soul often to account ; examine the temper, the frame, and the motions of your heart with all holy severity, so that the evidences of your faith in Jesus, and your repentance for sin, and your conversion to God, be many and fair, be strong and unquestionable ; that you may walk on with courage and joyful hope toward heaven, and lead on the flock of Christ thither with holy assurance and joy.

II. Take heed to your own religion, as to the liveliness and power of it. Let it not be a sleepy thing in your bosom, but sprightly and active, and always awake. Keep your own soul near God in the same way in which you first came near him, i. e. *by the mediation of Jesus Christ.* Let no distance or estrangement grow between God and you, between Christ and you. Maintain much converse with God by prayer, by reading his word, by holy meditation, by heavenly-mindedness, and universal holiness in the frame and temper of your own spirit. Converse with God and with your own soul in the duties of secret religion, and walk always in the world as under the eye of God. Every leader of the flock of God should act as Moses did, should live *as seeing him that is invisible*; Heb. xi. 27.

III. Take heed to your personal religion, as to the growth and increase of it. Let it be ever upon the advancing hand. Be tenderly sensible of every wandering affection toward vanity, every deviation from God and your duty, every rising sin, every degree of growing distance from God. *Watch and pray* much, and converse much with God, as one of his ministering angels in flesh and blood, and grow daily in conformity to God and your blessed Saviour, who is the first minister of his Father's kingdom, and the fairest image of his Father. Such a conduct will have several happy influences towards the fulfilling of your ministry, and will render you more fit for every part of your public ministrations.

1. Hereby you will improve in your acquaintance with divine things, and the spiritual parts of religion, that you may better teach the people both truth and duty. Those who are much with God may expect and hope, that he will teach them the secret of his covenant, and the ways of his mercy, by communications of divine light to their spirits. *The secret of the Lord is with them that fear him, and he will shew them his covenant*; Psalm xxv. 14. Luther used to say, that *he got more knowledge in a short time by prayer sometimes, than by the study and labor of many hours.*

2. Hereby you will be more fit to speak to the great God at all times, as a son with holy confidence in him as your father, and you will be better prepared to pray with and for the people. You will have an habitual readiness for the work, and increase in the gift of prayer. You will obtain a treasure and fluency of sacred language, suited to address God on all occasions. Hereby you will gain a freedom and interest in the throne of grace, and become a more powerful intercessor for your people, under the influence of Jesus the great Intercessor, who is ever near the throne; and be sure you improve your interest in heaven, for the edification of those committed to your care.

3. Hereby you will be kept near to the spring of all grace, to the fountain of strength and comfort in your work: You will be ever deriving fresh anointings, fresh influences, daily lights and powers, to enable you to go through all the difficulties and labors of your sacred office.

4. Hereby, when you come among men in your sacred ministrations, you will appear, and speak, and act like a man come from God; *like Moses with a lustre upon his face*, when he had conversed with God; like a minister of the court of heaven employed in a divine office; like a messenger of grace who hath just been with God, and received instructions from him; and the world will *take cognizance of you, as they did of the apostles, that they were men who had been with Jesus*; Acts iv. 13.

5. This will better furnish you for serious converse with the souls and consciences of men, by giving you experimental acquaintance with the things of religion, as they are transacted in the heart. You will learn more of the springs of sin and holiness, the workings of nature and grace, *the deceitfulness of sin*, the subtlety of temptation, and the holy skill of counterworking the snares of sin, and *the devices of Satan*, and all their designs to ruin the souls of men. You will speak with more divine compassion to wretched and perishing mortals; with more life and power to stupid sinners; with more sweetness and comfort to awakened consciences, and with more awful language and influence to backsliding Christians. You will hereby learn to preach more powerfully in all respects for the salvation of men, and talk more feelingly on every sacred subject, when the power, and sense, and life of Godliness are kept up in your own spirit. Then on some special occasions it may not be improper to borrow the language of David the prophet, and of St. Paul and St. John, two great apostles, though it may be best in public to speak in the plural number, *We have believed, therefore we have spoken; what we have heard and learned from Christ, we have declared unto you; what we have seen and felt, we are bold to speak; attend and we will tell you what God has done for our souls.* You may then at proper seasons convince, direct, and comfort others by the same words of light and power, of precept and promise, of joy and hope, which have convinced, directed and comforted you; a word coming from the heart will sooner reach the heart.

## SECTION II.—OF A MINISTER'S PRIVATE STUDIES.

THE second general head of exhortation relates to your own private studies: Take heed to these, that you may better fulfil

your ministry. *Give yourself* (saith St. Paul to Timothy) *to reading, to meditation, that your profiting may appear to all*; 1 Tim. iv. 13, 15. These private studies are of various kinds, whether you consider them in general, as necessary to furnish the mind with knowledge, for the office of the ministry; or in particular, as necessary to prepare discourses for the pulpit.

1st. Those general studies may be just mentioned in this place, which furnish the mind with knowledge for the work of a minister; for though it is known you have passed through the several stages of science in your younger years, and have made a good improvement in them, yet a review of many of them will be found needful, and an increase in some (so far as leisure permits) may be proper and useful, even through the whole course of life. Among these, some are necessary to improve the reasoning faculty, to teach us to distinguish truth from falsehood, and to judge aright concerning any subjects that are proposed to us; such are the art of logic, which gives us rules for judging and reasoning, and some of the speculative principles of the mathematics, particularly the demonstrations of geometry, and the inferences or corollaries that are drawn from them, wherein we have the clearest and fairest examples to teach us reasoning by the practice of it.

And as all arts and sciences have a connection with and influence upon each other, so for a divine as well as for a physician, it is needful there should be some knowledge of nature and the powers of it in the heavens and earth, in the air and water, that we may thereby learn and teach more of the glories of our Creator, and more easily distinguish between what is natural and what is miraculous. This will enable us also to think and speak more justly almost upon any subject which occurs in our private reading, in our public ministry, or in our daily conversation; and particularly it is useful, if not necessary for a minister to have some acquaintance with human nature, in the two constituent parts of it, soul and body, and in the powers and passions of mankind, that we may better distinguish how far particular actions are natural and mechanical, and how far they are voluntary and moral, virtuous or sinful; how far they are influenced by *flesh and blood*, and how far they are under the government of the will, which is of great importance in order to judge right in many cases of conscience, and to give directions for the moral or religious life.

It is needful also, and of considerable moment, that a divine should be acquainted with the arts of method and of oratory; the one to range our thoughts and discourses in due order, and to set the things of God before men in the plainest, the most conspicuous

and convincing light; and the other to win upon the hearts of the hearers, and to lead them by a sweet and powerful influence on their affections, into the love and practice of religion. There are other parts of science which are necessary for ministers to be well acquainted with, and particularly those which are the foundations of all religion; such as the knowledge of God and his attributes by the light of nature and reason, the knowledge of man as a creature of God, in his natural dependence upon his Creator, and in his moral relations both to God and his fellow-creatures, together with the obligations to duty which are derived thence, and which branch themselves into all the parts of morality and religion. It is requisite to have some acquaintance also with the heathen writers, the folly and madness of pagan idolatry, the history and the customs of ancient ages and nations, and the history of the church of the Jews and of Christians, in order to establish our faith in the doctrines of Christianity, and to prove the religion of Christ to be divine, and that the Bible is the word of God.

When this great point is once settled, then our chief business will be to understand this Bible, and to find out the meaning of the holy Scriptures; and for this end (as well as for the reading of ancient heathen authors) it is requisite that we should have some skill in the tongues; and particularly those wherein the Scriptures were written, *viz.* Hebrew and Greek, that we may be able at least to judge a little for ourselves, concerning the translation of any text in our language. For this purpose also some knowledge of the customs of the ancients, both Jews and Pagans, is necessary, in order to give us a juster idea of many things recorded in Scripture; and we should get some acquaintance with geography and chronology, which will be of great service to set before our eyes the distant places and times wherein those ancient affairs were transacted, which the Scripture relates, and without which the history of Scripture, as well as some of the prophecies, can never be well understood.

Nor is it an unprofitable study to read some of the writings of the fathers, who lived in the very first ages of Christianity, that we may know the sentiments and customs of those who lived nearest to the days of the apostles; this may give a little light to some expressions and phrases used in Scripture, and enable us sometimes better to understand what the evangelists and apostles wrote. But it must be confessed, that immediately after the apostolic age, and indeed before the apostles were dead, there were so many corruptions and mistakes both in faith and worship, so many fancies and inventions of men crept into the church, that there is scarce one ancient writer perfectly free, and not one of them to be entirely

trusted, as a direeter of our consciences, or as a regulator of our belief or practice. St. Paul himself tells us that in his days *the mystery of iniquity began to work*; 2 Thess. ii. 7. The fathers, as they are called, have many weak and fanciful things in their writings; it is the Bible alone that must be our guide; *the word of the Lord is pure and perfect.*

Above all things therefore, the constant reading and study of the holy Scriptures are necessary, in order to a larger and more complete acquaintance with our divine religion. Here our faith and conscience may rest safely, in all our enquiries about matters of belief or practice. The doctrines, the commands, the types and histories, the prophecies, the promises and threatenings of the word of God, are the brightest and noblest part of the knowledge of a minister. These are the things *that are able to make us and our hearers wise unto salvation, and to furnish the man of God for every good word and work*; 2 Tim. iii. 15, 16. Let us never imagine we know enough of divine things, while we dwell in flesh and blood. God and Christ, and the things of heaven, are fruitful and inexhaustible subjects of our enquiry and knowledge; they are so in this world, and they will be so for ever in the world to come. *The angels of God pry further into them*, nor shall the sons of men ever know them to perfection. These will be the glorious objects of everlasting study, and everlasting entertainment.

I might add in the last place, that there are some other parts of human knowledge, which, though they are not necessary, yet are greatly ornamental to a minister, in the present age, which is so much enriched with knowledge, *viz.* some further acquaintance with modern geography, the nations and kingdoms of this world; some general view of astronomy, the appearances, and seeming or real motions of the sun and moon, stars and planets, and of this earth, which is now generally agreed to be one of the planetary worlds; to which we may join some skill in philology, criticism on the writings of men as well as on Scripture, and various parts of science which go under the name of the *belles lettres*, or polite learning. These are such sort of accomplishments of the mind as will embellish the character of the minister, and render his person and his labors more acceptable to the world.

But amongst all these enquiries and studies, and these various improvements of the mind, let us take heed that none of them carry our thoughts away too far from our chief and glorious design, that is, *the ministry of the gospel of Christ*. Let none of them intrench upon those hours which should be devoted to our study of the Bible, or preparations for the pulpit: and wheresoever

we find our inclinations too much attached to any particular human science, let us set a guard upon ourselves, lest it rob us of our diviner studies, and our best improvement. A minister should remember, that himself, with all his studies, is consecrated to the service of the sanctuary : Let every thing be done therefore with a view to our great end : Let all the rest of our knowledge be like lines drawn from the vast circumference of universal nature, pointing to that divine centre, *God and religion* ; and let us pursue every part of science with a design to gain better qualifications thereby for our sacred work. Forgive me, my friends, that I have dwelt so long on these general preparations for the work of the ministry. Though they are learned at the academy, yet I can by no means think it proper they should be left there and forgotten.

2nd. I come to speak of those particular studies which are preparatory for the public work of the pulpit; and here when you retire to compose a sermon, let your great end be ever kept in view, *i. e.*, to say something for the honor of God, for the glory of Christ, for the salvation of the souls of men ; and for this purpose a few rules may perhaps be of some service. One great and general rule is, ask advice of Heaven by prayer about every part of your preparatory studies ; seek the direction and assistance of the Spirit of God, for inclining your thoughts to proper subjects, for guiding you to proper Scriptures, and framing your whole sermon both as to the matter and manner, that it may attain the divine and sacred ends proposed. But I insist not largely on this here, because prayers for aids and counsels from Heaven belong to every part of your work, both in the closet, in the pulpit, and in your daily conversation. The particular rules for your preparatory work may be such as these :

I. In choosing your texts, or themes of discourse, seek such as are most suited to do good to souls, according to the present wants, dangers, and circumstances of the people ; whether for the instruction of the ignorant ; for the conviction of the stupid and senseless ; for the melting and softening of the obstinate ; for the conversion of the wicked ; for the edification of converts ; for the comfort of the timorous and mournful ; for gentle admonition of backsliders, or more severe reproof. Some acquaintance with the general case and character of your hearers is needful for this end.

II. In handling the text, divide, explain, illustrate, prove, convince, infer, and apply in such a manner, as to do real service to men, and honor to our Lord Jesus Christ. Do not say within yourself, how much or how elegantly I can talk upon such a text, but

what can I say most usefully to those who hear me, for the instruction of their minds, for the conviction of their consciences, and for the persuasion of their hearts? Be not fond of displaying your learned criticisms in clearing up the terms and phrases of a text, where scholars only can be edified by them; nor spend away the precious moments of the congregation, in making them hear you explain what is clear enough before, and hath no need of explaining; nor in proving that which is so obvious that it wants no proof. This is little better than trifling with God and man. Think not, how can I make a sermon soonest and easiest? but how can I make the most profitable sermon for my hearers; not what fine things I can say, either in a way of criticism or philosophy, or in a way of oratory and harangue, but what powerful words I can speak to impress the consciences of them that hear with a serious and lasting sense of moral, divine, and eternal things. Judge wisely what to leave out as well as what to speak. Let not your chief design be to work up a sheet, or to hold out an hour, but to *save a soul.*

III. In speaking of the great things of God and religion, remember you are a minister of Christ and the gospel, sent to publish to men what God has revealed by his prophets and apostles, and by his Son Jesus; and not a heathen philosopher to teach the people merely what the light of reason can search out: You are not to stand up here as a professor of ancient or modern philosophy, nor an usher in the school of Plato or Seneca, or Mr. Locke; but as a teacher in the school of Christ, as a preacher of the New Testament. You are not a Jewish priest, to instruct men in the precise niceties of ancient Judaisms, legal rites and ceremonies; but you are a Christian minister; let Christianity, therefore, run through all your composure, and spread its glories over them all.

It is granted, indeed, that reasonings from the light of nature have a considerable use in the ministry of the gospel. It is by the principles of natural religion, and by reasoning from them on the wonderful events of prophecy and miracle, &c. that we ourselves must learn the truth of the Christian religion, and we must teach the people to build their faith of the gospel on just and rational grounds; and this may perhaps, at some time or other, require a few whole discourses on some of the principal themes of natural religion, in order to introduce and display the religion of Jesus. But such occasions will but seldom arise in the course of your ministry. It is granted also that it is a very useful labor sometimes in a sermon, to shew how far the light of nature and reason will carry us on in search of duty and happiness; and then to manifest

how happily the light of Scripture supplies the deficiencies of it; that the people may know how greatly they are indebted to the peculiar favor of God for the book of divine revelation.

And yet further, since the whole of natural religion is contained and included in the gospel of Christ, it is proper sometimes to show that reason as well as Scripture confirms the same doctrines, and obliges us to practise the same duties. It is certain also that human reason, though it could not discover the religion of Christ, yet it is able to point out many admirable glories and divine condescendencys in this religion when it is discovered. It is good to impress the conscience, as well as instruct the understanding, by the two great lights that God has given us, *viz.* reason and revelation. Two such pillars will support the structure of religion better than one. And when we happen to hear any of our brethren occasionally insisting on the themes of natural religion, and enforcing the belief of truths, or the practice of duties, by the principles of reason, let us candidly suppose they are pursuing some of these designs which I have now mentioned, and that the principles and topics of revelation and Christianity are in reserve, to be displayed at large in their following sermons.

In general it is most safe and honorable for a minister of Christ, to make the gospel appear to be the reigning principle in his discourses, and make his hearers see how gloriously it has improved the religion of nature. If you speak of our natural knowledge of the attributes of God, and the truths of religion that reason dictates, show how they are all exalted, how brightly they shine in the gospel of Christ, and what new discoveries and new glories relating to them are derived from the Holy Scriptures. If you speak of the duties which men owe to God, or to one another, even those which are found out by reason and natural conscience, show how the gospel of Christ hath advanced and refined every thing that nature and reason teach us: Enforce these duties by motives of Christianity, as well as by philosophical arguments drawn from the nature of things: Stir up the practice of them by *the examples of Christ and his apostles*, by that *heaven* and that *hell* which are revealed to the world by Jesus Christ our Saviour: Impress them on the heart by the constraining influence of the *mercy of God* and the *dying love of our Lord Jesus Christ*, by his *glorious appearance to judge the living and the dead*, and by our blessed hope of attending him on that day. These are the appointed arguments of our holy religion, and may expect more divine success.

When you have occasion to represent what need there is of diligence and labor in the duties of holiness, show also what aids

are promised in the gospel, to humble and feeble souls who are sensible of their own frailty to resist temptations, or to discharge religious and moral duties; and what influences of the Holy Spirit may be expected by those who seek it. Let them know that Christ is exalted to send forth his Spirit, *to bestow repentance and sanctification as well as forgiveness*; for *without him we can do nothing*; Acts v. 31. John xv. 5.

As there are seasons and times proper to impress the mind with the glories of God our Creator, and to enforce the duties of morality, to teach men to govern their unruly appetites and passions, to bind all the rules of virtue on the consciences of men, and press them with zeal and fervor, according to the example of the apostles in the New Testament; so there are times and seasons to treat more at large on the peculiar truths of revelation and the glories of Christianity, both for the honor of our Saviour, and for the welfare of souls. For this reason they are so largely insisted on by the holy writers, those blessed patterns of our ministry. There must be some seasons allotted to the descriptions of the sinful and miserable state of mankind as revealed in Scripture; to the dignity of the person of Christ the Redeemer, *the only begotten Son of God, and the Son of Man*; to the covenant of grace, of pardon and salvation made with men, in and through this glorious Mediator; to the incarnation, life and death, the sacrifice and atonement, the resurrection, intercession, and universal government and lordship of Jesus Christ, and his *coming to judge the world at the last day*; and to the appointed methods of our participation of the blessings which he bestows. These illustrious doctrines are big with a thousand duties both to God and man; all the practices of faith and love, repentance and universal holiness flow from them by plain and easy deduction; all the sacred rules of piety and virtue, sobriety, justice and goodness, the holy skill of living and dying in the love and favor of God, are the most natural and happy inferences from these sublime truths of our religion. We preach the gospel in a very defective manner, if we neglect the moral or divine duties which are derived from the faith of Christ.

If you would raise the hearts of your hearers to a just and high esteem of this gospel of grace, and impress them with an awful sense of the divine importance and worth of it, be not afraid to lay human nature low, and to represent it in its ruins by the fall of *the first Adam*. It is the vain exaltation of ruined nature, that makes the gospel so much despised in our age. Labor, therefore, to make them see and feel the deplorable state of mankind as described in Scripture, *that by one man sin entered into the world,*

and death by sin, and a sentence of death hath passed upon all men, for that all have sinned ; let them hear and know that Jews and Gentiles are all under sin, that there is none righteous, no, not one ; that every mouth may be stopped, and all the world may appear guilty before God. Let them know that it is not in man that walketh to direct his steps ; that we are not sufficient of ourselves to think any good thing ; that we are without strength, alienated from the life of God through the ignorance and darkness of our understandings, and are by nature children of disobedience, and children of wrath ; that we are unable to recover ourselves out of these depths of wretchedness without the condescensions of divine grace, and that the gospel of Christ is introduced as the only sovereign remedy and relief under all this desolation of nature, this overwhelming distress ; neither is there salvation in any other, for there is none other name under heaven given among men, whereby we must be saved ; *Acts iv. 12.* And they that wilfully and obstinately reject this message of divine love, must perish without remedy and without hope ; *for there remains no more sacrifice for sin, but a certain fearful expectation of vengeance ; Heb. x. 26.* By this conduct you will approve yourself to be a faithful messenger of Christ in good earnest, a minister of the *New Testament*, and a workman that needs not to be ashamed, if you take special seasons to discover to men what the word of God reveals concerning their misery, and declare to them the whole counsel of God for their salvation. I entreat you, my dear friend and brother, to get it deeply impressed on your heart, that as (I believe) your real and sincere design is to save the souls of men from sin and eternal death, so it is the gospel of Christ which is the only instrument whereby you can ever hope to attain this blessed end ; and that for two reasons :

1. It is this gospel which, in its own nature, is most happily suited in all the parts of it to this great design ; and no other schemes which the wit or reason of man can contrive are so : It is the voice of pardoning grace and reconciliation to God by Jesus Christ, that powerfully allures and encourages the awakened sinner, to return to his duty to God and his Maker : It is the promise of divine assistance to enable us to mortify sin, and to practise holiness, which animates the feeble creature to attempt it : It is the attractive view of heavenly blessedness as revealed in the gospel, that invites the soul onward to make its way through all the dangerous enticements and terrors of this world, which is at enmity with God. The divine fitness of this gospel of grace, to restore fallen man to the favor and image of his Maker, is so various and

astonishing, that to describe it in all instances would require a large volume.

And 2. As the gospel is so happily suited to attain these ends, so it is the only effectual means that God has appointed, in the lips of his ministers, for this purpose. It is with these wondrous discoveries of this gospel, that he furnished the minds and lips of the fishermen and illiterate persons, when he sent them forth to convert and save a perishing world. These were the sacred weapons with which they were armed, when our exalted Saviour gave them commission to travel through the dominions of Satan, which were spread over the heathen countries, and to raise up a kingdom for himself amongst them. It was with principles, rules, and motives, derived from this gospel, that they were sent to attack the reigning vices of mankind, to reform profligate nations, and to turn them *from dumb idols to serve the living God*. And though St. Paul were a man of learning above the rest, yet he was not sent to preach *the enticing words of man's wisdom*, nor to talk as the disputers of the age and philosophers did in their schools ; but his business was to *preach Christ crucified* : Though this doctrine of the cross and the Son of God hanging upon it, was *a stumbling block to the Jews, and the Greeks counted it foolishness, yet to them that were called, both Jews and Greeks*, this doctrine was *the power of God, and the wisdom of God* for the salvation of men. And therefore St. Paul determined to know nothing among them, in comparison of the doctrine of Christ and him crucified. These were *the weapons of his warfare, which were mighty through God to the pulling down of the strong holds of sin and Satan* in the hearts of men, and brought *every thought into captivity to the obedience of Christ*. It was by the ministration of this gospel that the fornicators were made chaste and holy, and idolaters became worshippers of the God of heaven ; that thieves learned honest labor, and the covetous were taught to seek treasure in heaven ; the drunkards grew out of love with their cups, and renounced all intemperance ; the revilers governed their tongues and spoke well of their neighbors, and the cruel extortioners and oppressors learned to practise compassion and charity : These vilest of sinners, these children of hell, were made heirs of the kingdom of heaven, *being washed, being sanctified, being justified in the name of the Lord Jesus*, and by the Spirit of our God ; 1 Cor. vi. 9, &c.

Had you all the refined science of Plato or Socrates, all the skill in morals that ever was attained by Zeno, Seneca or Epictetus ; were you furnished with all the flowing oratory of Cicero, or the thunder of Demosthenes ; were all these talents and excellencies

united in one man, and you were the person so richly endowed, and could you employ them all in every sermon you preach, yet you could have no reasonable hope to convert and save one soul in Great Britain, where the gospel is published, while you lay aside the glorious gospel of Christ, and leave it entirely out of your discourses. Let me proceed yet further and say, had you the fullest acquaintance that ever man acquired with all the principles and duties of natural religion, both in its regard to God and to your fellow-creatures, had you the skill and tongue of an angel to range all these in their fairest order, to place them in their fullest light, and to pronounce and represent the whole law of God with such force and splendor to a British auditory, as was done to the Israelites at Mount Sinai, you might perhaps lay the consciences of men under deep conviction, *for by the law is the knowledge of sin*: But I am fully persuaded you would never reconcile one soul to God, you would never change the heart of one sinner, nor bring him into the favor of God, nor fit him for the joys of heaven, without this blessed gospel which is committed to your hands.

The great and glorious God is jealous of his own authority, and of the honor of his Son Jesus; nor will he condescend to bless any other methods for obtaining so divine an end, than what he himself has prescribed; nor will his Holy Spirit, whose office is *to glorify Christ*, stoop to concur with any other sort of means for the saving of sinners, where the name and offices of his Son, the only appointed Saviour, are known, and despised, and neglected. It is the gospel alone that is *the power of God to salvation*. If the prophets will not stand in his counsel, nor cause the people to hear his words, they will never be able to turn Israel from the iniquity of their ways, nor the evil of their doings; Jer. xxiii. 22.

Perhaps it may be said in opposition to this advice, that the peculiar doctrines and discoveries of the gospel of Christ, were necessary to be published in a more large and particular manner, at the first institution of our religion, and to be insisted upon with greater frequency among the Jews, and especially among the Gentiles, who before were unacquainted with the name, the history, and the several offices of the blessed Jesus; but there is no such need of repeating them in Christian countries, where people are trained up from their infancy to know *Jesus Christ the Son of God, the Saviour of the world*: And therefore it is more needful in our land to preach upon the natural duties of piety toward God, of justice and truth, and goodness toward our neighbor, and self-government and sobriety with regard to ourselves. And this may be done with good success among the people, upon the plain prin-

ciples and motives which arise from the very nature of things, from the beauty and excellency of virtue, and its tendency to make all men happy, and the natural deformity of vice, and the mischiefs that attend it. But give me leave to answer this objection with these three or four inquiries :

*First,* Was it not the special design of these doctrines of Christ, when they were first graciously communicated to the world, to reform the vices of mankind which reason could not reform, and to restore the world to piety and virtue, for which the powers of reason appeared so feeble and impotent ? The nations of the earth had made long and fruitless essays, what the light of nature and philosophy would do, to bring wandering, degenerate man back again to his Maker : Fruitless and long essays indeed, when, after some thousands of years, the world, who had forgotten their Maker and his laws, still ran further from God, and plunged themselves into all abominable impieties and corrupt practices ! Now, if the all-wise God saw the gospel of Christ, to be so fit and happy an instrument for the recovery of wretched man to religion and morality ; if he furnished his apostles with these doctrines for this very purpose, and pronounced a blessing upon them as his own appointment, why should we not suppose, that this gospel is still as fit in its own nature for the same purposes, as it was at first ? And why may we not hope, the same heavenly blessing, in a great measure to remain upon it, for these purposes, to the end of the world ? While we introduce these divine topics, drawn from the gospel of Christ, to enforce piety and virtue upon the consciences of men, God forbid that we should abandon those arguments, drawn from the nature of things, and from human reason : The gospel does by no means exclude them, but clears, and enlightens, and advances them all, and gives them tenfold power for the purposes for which they are designed. The blessed apostles themselves sometimes made use of them ; and they may be spread abroad in a rich variety by every preacher of the gospel to much better purpose, than a Seneca, or an Epictetus could display them. All kinds of efforts are necessary, and every sort of weapon may be used in its proper place, to make assaults upon the kingdom of Satan in the hearts of men ; but it is evident, that the divine principles and motives of Christianity were sent us down from heaven, as more sovereign remedies for the mortal diseases of the soul, and far more effectual for the reformation of mankind.

*Secondly,* If the beautiful ideas of virtue and religion, and the natural tendency of it to make men happy, be such sufficient motives to enforce the practice of it, I would inquire, why was not the

Gentile world reformed without the gospel? Why were the polite and knowing nations so abominably and almost universally sunk into shameful vices? Why did not the self-sufficient reward of virtue constrain greater numbers of mankind to change their manners, and to practise good morality? If this had been the best and most effectual way of changing the hearts and of reforming the profligate lives of men, why was not St. Paul sent only or chiefly with these principles and instructions of reason, to talk of the divine beauty of religion and excellency of virtue amongst them, and the advantages that it brought into human society and private life? What need was there that he should be commissioned to preach the doctrine of *the cross of Christ*, and the love of the Son of God descending from heaven to die for sinners? What makes him dwell so much upon the recovery of a sinful world to God, by the atonement and sufferings of the blessed Jesus, as a means and motive to persuade sinners to forsake their sins, and to be reconciled to God? Why are the evangelic topics so often insisted on, and represented in lively language, for the encouragement of virtue and piety, and as a guard against sin? What need had he of the history of a *crucified Son of God rising from the dead, ascending to heaven, sitting at the right hand of God, interceding for sinners*, and governing the world, in order to reform mankind from vice and impiety? Why does the Scripture tell us, that the hearts of men are to be *purified by faith, that believing on the Son of God is the way to get the victory over the world?* What need was there that St. Paul should teach us, that our sins are to be mortified in us by the assistance of the Holy Spirit; or that St. Peter or St. John should tell us, that *we must be born again, and made new creatures by the word of God*, and by this blessed Spirit and his influences? Were all these doctrines so needful in the primitive days, and attended with such illustrious and divine success, and are they grown useless and needless now?

Let me enquire, in the *third* place, Are all the hearers that make up our public assemblies so well acquainted with the doctrines of Christ and the gospel in our day, that they have no need to be taught them? Have they all enjoyed so happy an education from their infancy, as to understand the principles of the Christian religion, and the peculiar articles of the faith, which are so necessary to restore sinners to a divine life? Do they so much as know that they *are by nature dead in trespasses and sins?* And do they know how to apply those vital truths to the blessed purposes of godliness? I am sure when we make particular enquiries, we find many of them ignorant enough both of themselves and their

Saviour, and they *have need to be taught the first principles of the oracles of God*, and the faith of Jesus.

Shall I enquire yet farther, Is this a day when we should leave the peculiar articles of the religion of Christ out of our ministrations, when the truth of them is boldly called in question, and denied by such multitudes who dwell among us ? Is this a proper time for us to forget the name of Christ in our public labors, when the witty talents and reasonings of men join together, and labor hard to cast out his sacred name with contempt and scorn ? Is it so reasonable a practice in this age, to neglect these evangelic themes, and to preach up virtue, without the special principles and motives with which Christ has furnished us, when there are such numbers amongst us who are fond of heathenism, who are endeavoring to introduce it again into a Christian country, and to spread the poison of infidelity through a nation called by his name ? If this be our practice, our hearers will begin to think indeed that infidels may have some reason on their side, and that the glorious doctrines of the gospel of Christ are not so necessary as our fathers thought them, while they find no mention of them in the pulpit, no use of them in our discourses from week to week, and from month to month, and yet we profess to preach for the salvation of souls. Will this be our glory to imitate the heathen philosophers, and to drop the Gospel of the Son of God ? To be complimented by unbelievers as men of superior sense, and as deep reasoners, while we abandon the faith of Jesus, and starve the souls of our hearers, by neglecting to distribute to them this *bread of life which came down from heaven* ? O let us who are his ministers remember the last words of our departing Lord, *Go, preach the gospel to every nation : He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved ; and he that believeth not shall be damned ; and lo, I am with you alway, to the end of the world* ; Mark xvi. 15, 16. Matt. xxviii. 20. Let us fulfil the command, let us publish the threatening with the promise, and let us wait for the attendant blessing.

Wheresoever this gospel is published, with clear and proper evidence, the belief of it is made necessary to salvation, and it is part of the commission of ministers to make known this to the people ; nor is there any thing else which can stand in the room and stead of this gospel, or attain those happy purposes for which this holy institution was designed. Unless, therefore, you have such a high esteem for the gospel of Christ, and such a sense of its divine worth and power, as to take it along with you when you desire to save souls, you had better lay down the ministry and abandon your sacred profession ; for you will but *spend your*

*strength for nought, and waste your breath in vain declamations : You will neither save your own soul, nor them that hear you ; and you will have a terrible account to give at the last day, what you have done with this gospel which was entrusted with you for the salvation of men : You have hid this divine talent in the earth, you have traded entirely with your own stock, you have compassed yourself about with sparks of light of your own kindling, and you must lie down in sorrow with eternal loss.*

Forgive me, my dear brother and friend, and you, my beloved and honored brethren in the ministry, forgive me, if I have indulged too much vehemence in this part of my discourse ; if I have given too great a loose to pathetic language on this needful subject. I doubt not but your own consciences bear me witness, that this elevated voice is not the voice of reproof, but of friendly warning ; and, I persuade myself, that you all join with me in this sentiment, that if ever we are so happy as to reform the lives of our hearers, to convert their hearts to God, and to train them up for heaven, it must be done by the principles of the gospel of Christ. On the occasion of such a head of advice, therefore, I assure myself you will forgive these warm emotions of spirit. Can there be any juster cause or season to exert fervor and zeal, than while we are pleading for the name, and honor, and kingdom of our adored Jesus ? Let him live, let him reign for ever on his throne of glory ; let him live upon our lips, and reign in all our ministrations : Let him live in the hearts of all our hearers ; let him live and reign through Great Britian, and through all the nations, till iniquity be subdued, till the kingdom of Satan be destroyed, and the whole world are become willing subjects to the sceptre of his grace ! Thus have I finished my third exhortation relating to the preparation of your sermons for the pulpit.

IV. In addressing your discourse to your hearers, remember to distinguish the different characters of saints and sinners, the converted and the unconverted, the sincere Christian and the formal professor, the stupid and the awakened ; the diligent and backsliding, the fearful or humble soul, and the obstinate and presumptuous ; and in various seasons introduce a word for each of them. Thus you will divide the word of God aright, and give to every one their portion ; 2 Tim. ii. 15. The general way of speaking to all persons in one view, and under one character, as though all your hearers were certainly true Christians, and converted already, and wanted only a little farther reformation of heart and life, is too common in the world ; but I think it is a dangerous way of preaching : It hath a powerful and unhappy tendency to lull unregenerate

sinners asleep in security, to flatter and deceive them with dreams of happiness, and make their consciences easy without a real conversion of heart to God.

Let your hearers know that there is a vast and unspeakable difference betwixt a saint and a sinner, one in Christ, and one out of Christ ; between one whose heart is in a state of corrupt nature or unrenewed, and one that is in a state of grace, and renewed to faith and holiness ; between one who is only *born of the flesh, and is a child of wrath, and one who is born again, or born of the Spirit, and is become a child of God*, a member of Christ, and an heir of heaven. Let them know that this distinction is great and necessary ; and it is not made (as some have imagined) by the water of baptism, but by the operations of the word and Spirit of God on the hearts of men, and by their diligent attendance on all the appointed means and methods of converting grace. It is a most real change, and of infinite importance, and however it has been derided by men, it is glorious in the eyes of God, and it will be made to appear so at the last day in the eyes of men and angels ; but it will bring with it infinite terror to those, who thought themselves safe in a common careless profession of Christianity, without any inward and divine change of heart. That little treatise, written by the learned Mr. John Jennings, concerning the preaching of Christ and experimental preaching, has many valuable hints relating to these two last particulars of my exhortation.

V. Lead your hearers wisely into the knowledge of the truth, and teach them to build their faith upon solid grounds. Let them first know why they are Christians, that they may be firmly established in the belief and profession of the religion of Christ ; that they may be guarded against all the assaults of temptation and infidelity in this evil day, and may be able to *render a reason of the hope that is in them* ; furnish them with arguments in opposition to the rude cavils and blasphemies which are frequently thrown out in the world against the name and doctrines of the holy Jesus.

Then let the great, the most important, and most necessary articles of our religion, be set before your hearers in their fairest light. Convey them into the understandings of those of meanest capacity, by condescending sometimes to plain and familiar methods of speech ; prove these important doctrines and duties to them by all proper reasons and arguments ; but as to the introducing of controversies into the pulpit, be not fond of it, nor frequent in it : In your common course of preaching avoid disputes, especially about things of less importance, without an apparent call of Providence.

Religious controversies, frequently introduced without real necessity, have an unhappy tendency to hurt the spirit of true godliness both in the hearts of preachers and hearers; 1 Tim. iv. 7. And have a care of laying too much stress on the peculiar notions, and terms, and phrases of the little sects and parties in Christianity; take heed that you do not make your hearers bigots and uncharitable, while you endeavor to make them knowing Christians. Establish them in all the chief and most important articles of the gospel of Christ, without endeavoring to render those who differ from you odious in the sight of your hearers. Whosoever you are constrained to declare your disapprobation of particular opinions, keep up and manifest your love to the persons of those who espouse them, and especially if they are persons of virtue and piety.

VI. Do not content yourself to compose a sermon of mere doctrinal truths and articles of belief, but into every sermon (if possible) bring something practical. It is true, knowledge is the foundation of practice; the head must be furnished with a degree of knowledge, or the heart cannot be good: But take heed that dry speculations and mere schemes of orthodoxy do not take up too large a part of your compositions; and be sure to impress it frequently on your hearers, that holiness is the great end of all knowledge, and of much more value than the sublimest speculations; nor is there any doctrine but what requires some correspondent practice of piety or virtue. And among the practical parts of Christianity, sometimes make it your business to insist on those subjects which are inward and spiritual, and which go by the name of experimental religion. Now and then take such themes as these, *viz.* the first awakenings of the conscience of a sinner by some special and awful providence, by some particular passages in the word of God, in pious writings or public sermons, the inward terrors of the mind, and fears of the wrath of God, which sometimes accompany such awakenings: the temptations which arise to divert the mind from them, and to soothe up the sinner in the course of his iniquities; the inward conflicts of the spirit in these seasons, the methods of relief under such temptations, the arguments that may fix the heart and will for God, against all the enticements and oppositions of the world; the labors of the conscience fluctuating between hope and fear; the rising and working of indwelling sin in the heart; the subtle excuses framed by the flesh for the indulgence of it; *the peace of God* derived from the gospel allaying the inward terrors of the soul under a sense of guilt; the victories obtained over strong corruptions and powerful temptations, by the faith of unseen things,

by repeated addresses to God in prayer, by trusting in Jesus the great Mediator, *who is made of God to us wisdom and righteousness, sanctification and redemption.*

While you are treating on these subjects, give me leave to put you again in mind, that it will sometimes have a very happy influence on the minds of hearers, to speak what you have learned from your own experience, though there is no need that you should tell them publicly it is your own : You may inform them what you borrowed from your own observation, and from the experience of Christians, ancient or modern, who have passed through the same trials, who have wrestled with the same corruptions of nature, who have grappled with the same difficulties, and at last have been made conquerors over the same temptations. *As face answers face in the glass, so the heart of one man answers to another;* and the workings of the different principles of flesh and spirit, corrupt nature, and renewing grace, have a great deal of resemblance in the hearts of different persons who have passed through them. This sort of instruction, drawn from just and solid experience, will animate and encourage the young Christian, that begins to shake off the slavery of sin, and to set his face towards heaven : This will make it appear, that religion is no impracticable thing ; it will establish and comfort the professors of the gospel, and excite them with new vigor to proceed in the way of faith and holiness ; it will raise a steadfast courage and hope, and will generally obtain a most happy effect upon the souls of the hearers, beyond all that you can say to them from principles of mere reasoning and dry speculation ; and especially where you have the concurrent experience of any scriptural examples.

VII. Whether you are discoursing of doctrine or of duty, take great care that you impose nothing on your hearers, either as a matter of faith or practice, but what your Lord and Master Jesus Christ has imposed. These are the limits of the commission which Christ gave to the first ministers of the gospel; Matt. xxviii. 19, 20. *Go disciple all nations, baptizing them who are willing to become my disciples, and teach them to observe whatsoever I have commanded you.* He has not given leave to his ministers, whether separate in their single congregations, or united in synods or councils, the least degree of power to appoint one new article of faith, nor to enjoin any new sort of devotion or practice, nor to impose any one rite or ceremony of worship but what he himself has framed and enjoined. And yet, to our universal reproach, there is scarce any party of Christians but hath been too ready to impose some doctrines upon the belief of their proselytes which Christ has

not imposed, or to require of them some practices or some abstinences about meats or days, or things indifferent, which Christ has not required. It is this assuming power that has turned Christianity into a hundred shapes, and every one of them in some degree unlike the glorious gospel. It is this has brought in all the superstitions and fooleries, the splendid vanities, the useless austerities, and the childish trifles of the Greek and Romish churches ; and it is this has too far corrupted the purity, and defaced the beauty of most of those churches who boast of reformation, and wear the Protestant name.

Now to discourage and deter us all from such presumption, let us remember that this imposing spirit has generally found it necessary to support its commands with penalties and persecutions. Hence proceed the imprisonments and the murders, the cruelties, the tortures, and the wild and bloody fury that has ravaged the nations of Christendom, and cast a foul and lasting blot and infamy upon the religion of the blessed Jesus. Blessed Jesus ! when shall this stain be washed out from thy religion, and this scandal die ? If we survey the persecuting laws and edicts that have been framed and executed in Great Britain, or in foreign nations, in ancient or later times, we shall seldom find that the plain and explicit doctrines and duties of the gospel have been guarded with these terrors ; but it is the wretched inventions of men, it is the institutions of priests, or the appointments of kings (all which have been mere additions to the word of God), that have had the honor, shall I say, or the infamy to be thus guarded with bloody severities, and with engines of death. It is the absolute determination of men upon some points which Christ has not plainly determined ; it is some forms of pretended orthodoxy which Scripture knows nothing of, or at least which the word of God has not made necessary to our faith ; it is some ceremonies or modes of worship which Christ and his apostles never commanded, that have generally been the shameful occasion of excommunications and prisons, of banishments and martyrdoms. See to it therefore with a holy and religious care, when you dictate any thing to your hearers as necessary to be believed or practised, that you have the plain and evident direction of Scripture to support you in it.

It is this corrupt mixture of human opinions, and human forms of divine service, that has so disguised the pure religion of the gospel, as to tempt the deist to renounce it entirely. The pure religion of Jesus has divine charms in it, and is, like the author, *altogether lovely* ; but when on one hand it is corrupted and debased, by new doctrines foisted into our creeds, and new mysteries

which men have invented to overload our faith; when it is incumbered by new rituals of worship, or imposed rules and practices on the other hand, which the holy Scripture hath not enjoined; when men make articles of faith, which are no where plainly revealed; when they pronounce that to be a sin which God hath no where forbidden, and appoint that to be a duty which God hath never commanded (which I take to be the very nature of superstition), it casts such a veil of deformity over the beauties of the gospel, that it is no wonder if the men of reason start at it, and pronounce against it. While we hold forth this confused mass and mixture of things divine and human, and call it the religion of Christ, we tempt the men of infidelity to establish themselves in their unbelief; and they will hardly now give a favorable hearing to the pure doctrine of the gospel, because they have been so much disgusted with the sight of it, in a corrupt and superstitious dress.

But in this state of frailty and imperfection, dangers attend us on either hand. As we must take heed that we do not add the fancies of men to our divine religion, so we should take equal care that we do not curtail the appointments of Christ. With a sacred vigilance and zeal, we should maintain the plain, express, and necessary articles, that we find evidently written in the word of God, and suffer none of them to be lost through our default. The world has been so long imposed upon by these shameful additions of men to the gospel of Christ, that they seem now to be resolved to bear them no longer. But they are unhappily running into another extreme; because several sects and parties of Christians have tacked on so many false and unbecoming ornaments to Christianity, they resolve to deliver her from these disguises; but while they are paring off all this foreign trumpery, they too often cut her to the quick, and sometimes let out her life-blood (if I may so express it), and maim her of her very limbs and vital parts. Because so many irrational notions and follies have been mixed up with the Christian scheme, it is now a modish humor of the age to renounce almost every thing that reason doth not discover, and to reduce Christianity itself to little more than the light of nature and the dictates of reason. And under this sort of influence, there are some who are believers of the Bible and the divine mission of Christ, and dare not renounce the gospel itself; yet they interpret some of the peculiar and express doctrines of it into so poor, so narrow, and so jejune a meaning, that they suffer but little to remain beyond the articles of natural religion. This leads some of the learned and polite men of the age to explain away the sacrifice and the atonement made for our sins by the death of Christ, and to bereave our

religion of the ordinary aids of the Holy Spirit, both which are so plainly and expressly revealed, and so frequently repeated in the New Testament, and which are two of the chief glories of the blessed gospel, and which perhaps are two of the chief uses of those sacred names of *the Son and the Holy Spirit*, into which we are baptized. It is this very humor that persuades some persons to reduce the injury and mischief that we have sustained by the sin and fall of Adam, to so slight a bruise and so inconsiderable a wound, that a small matter of grace is needful for our recovery; and accordingly they impoverish the rich and admirable remedy of the gospel to a very culpable degree, supposing no more to be necessary for the restoration of man, than those few ingredients, which in their opinion, make up the whole composition. Hence it comes to pass, that the doctrine of regeneration, or an entire change of corrupt nature by a principle of divine grace, is almost lost out of their Christianity; or at least they suppose renewing grace and sanctification by the Holy Spirit, and his assistances, to carry nothing more in them than the outward divine messages and discoveries of grace, made and attested by the extraordinary gifts of the Spirit to the Christian world. This is a dangerous extreme on the other hand; I hope it will never obtain amongst us Protestant dissenters; but since it is a fashionable error, you ought to set a stricter guard against it. As *he that adds or takes away from the words of the prophecy in the latter end of the book of God, is left under a curse*; Rev. xxii. 18. 19. so we should set a holy guard upon ourselves, lest we add any thing to the gospel of Christ; or take any thing from it, lest we expose ourselves to the same divine indignation.

To avoid both these extremes, permit me to give this general word of advice, and may God enable me to take it myself, *viz.* That in all our ministrations we keep a constant and religious eye upon the holy Scripture, that in the necessary and most important points of doctrine or duty, we may teach our hearers neither more nor less than the Scripture teaches. Our great business is to expound Scripture, and enforce the word of God upon the minds and hearts of men; When therefore we explain the great and necessary points of the gospel contained in any one Scripture, let us do it as much as possible by bringing other parts of Scripture into the same view, that the word of God may be a comment on itself. When we have occasion to make inferences from it, let us take care that the connection of them be strong and evident, and that they lie not far off at a distance, for in very distant inferences we are more liable to mistake. When we are delivering our own best opinions con-

cerning divine subjects, and giving our advice upon matters which are not evidently and so expressly revealed, let us practice the modesty of the blessed apostle, 1 Cor. vii. 6, 10, 12, 25, &c. *I speak this by permission or advice, and not of commandment:\** *It is I speak it, and not the Lord: I have no plain commandment of the Lord about it, yet I give my judgment as one that has obtained mercy of the Lord to be faithful: I suppose, therefore, that in the present case, this is good to be practised, or that to be avoided: Judge ye within yourselves, whether what I speak be agreeable to the word of God; 1 Cor. xi. 13.*

VIII. Remember that you have to do with the understanding, reason, and memory of man, with the heart and conscience, with the will and affections; and therefore you must use every method of speech which may be most proper to engage and employ each of these faculties, or powers of human nature, on the side of religion, and in the interests of God and the gospel. Your first business is with the understanding, to make even the lower parts of your auditory know what you mean. Endeavor, therefore, to find out all the clearest and most easy forms of speech, to convey divine truths, into the minds of men. Seek to obtain a perspicuous style, and a clear and distinct manner of speaking, that you may effectually impress the understanding, while you pronounce the words; that you may so exactly imprint on the mind of the hearers the same ideas which you yourself have conceived, that they may never mistake your meaning. This talent is sooner attained in younger years, by having some judicious friend to hear or read over your discourses, and inform you where perspicuity is wanting in your language, and where the hearers may be in danger of mistaking your sense. For want of this, some young preachers have fixed themselves in such an obscure way of writing and talking, as hath very much prevented their hearers from obtaining distinct ideas of their discourse. And if a man gets such an unhappy habit, he will be sometimes talking to the air, and make the people stare at him, as though he was speaking some unknown language.

Remember you have to do with the reasoning powers of man, in

\* I know these expressions of the apostle have another turn given them by some judicious commentators, *viz.* that the apostle had sufficient proof of the directions which he pronounces strongly to be the commands of Christ from other places of Scripture; but that these which he expresses so cautiously, were directions which Christ had not elsewhere given us, but were made known to him by his own special inspiration. I am not fully assured which is the true sense, but I rather think it is to be understood, as St. Paul's own private sense of things, who was a man favored with many inspiration.

preaching the gospel of Christ; for though this gospel be revealed from heaven, and could never be discovered by all the efforts of human reason, yet it is the reason of man must judge of several things relating to it, *viz.* It is reason must determine whether the evidence of its heavenly original be clear and strong: It is reason must judge whether such a doctrine or such a duty be contained in this gospel, or may be justly deduced from it: It is the work of human reason to compare one Scripture with another, and to find out the true sense of any particular text by this means: And it is reason also must give its sentence, whether a doctrine, which is pretended to be contained in Scripture, be contrary to the eternal and unchangeable relations and reasons of things; and if so, then reason may pronounce that this doctrine is not from God, nor can be given us by divine revelation. Reason, therefore, hath its office and proper province, even in matters of revelation; yet it must always be confessed, that some propositions may be revealed to us from heaven, which may be so far superior to the limits and sphere of our reasoning powers in this present state, that human reason ought not to reject them, because it cannot fully understand them, nor clearly and perfectly reconcile them, unless it plainly see a natural absurdity in them, a real impossibility, or a plain inconsistence with other parts of divine revelation.

Well then, since you have to do with reasonable creatures in your sacred work, let your manner of speaking be rational, and your arguments and inferences just and strong, that you may effectually convince your hearers of the truth of what you deliver, in your ministrations of the gospel. And in your representation of things to the reason and understanding of men, it would sometimes be of special advantage to have some power over the fancy or imagination: This would help us to paint our themes in their proper colors, whether of the alluring or the forbidden kind. And now and then we should make use of both, in order to impress the idea on the soul with happier force and success.

When you would describe any of the personal or social virtues of life, so as to enforce their practice, set yourself to display the beauties and excellencies of them, in their own agreeable and lovely forms and colors. But do not content yourself with this alone: This is not sufficient to allure the degenerate and sensual mind of man to practise them. Few persons are of so happy a disposition, and so refined a genius, as to be wrought upon by the mere aspect of such inviting qualities. Endeavor, therefore, to illustrate the virtues by their contrary vices, and set forth these moral mischiefs both in their deformities and their dangerous consequences, before

the eyes of your hearers. Think it not enough to represent to them the shining excellencies of humility and benevolence, of justice, and veracity, gratitude, and temperance; but produce to sight the vile features of pride, envy, malice, spite, knavery, falsehood, revenge, sensuality, luxury, and the rest of that cursed train, in their proper places and seasons. Make it evident, how contrary they are both to the law of God and the gospel of Christ; describe them in all their several forms, shapes, and appearances; strip them of their false pretences and disguises; shew how they insinuate and exert themselves in different occurrences of life, and different constitutions; and pursue them so narrowly, as it were, with a hue and cry, with such exact descriptions, that if any of these vices are indulged by your hearers, they may be found out by strict self-examination, that the consciences of the guilty may be laid under conviction of sin, and be set in the way of repentance and reformation.

Whosoever any vice has found the way into our bosoms, and make its nest there, its proper and evil features and characters had need to be marked out by the preacher with great accuracy, that it may be discovered to our consciences in order to its destruction; for these wretched hearts of ours are naturally so fond of all their own innates, that they are too ready to hide their ill qualities from our own sight and conviction, and thus they cover and save them from the sentence of mortification and death, which is denounced against every sin in the word of God. And let the preacher and the hearer both remember, that sin must be pursued to the death, or else there is no life to the soul. It is only the Christian who *by the Spirit mortifies the sinful deeds of the body, has the promise of salvation and life*; Rom. viii. 13. It would be a happy thing, if this vivacious and sprightly power of the fancy, which too often becomes an ingenious and successful tempter of the soul to guilt, mischief and ruin, might, by the art of the preacher, be gained over to the interests of virtue and goodness, and employed for God and salvation.

Think farther, that you should take some care also to engage the memory, and to make it serve the purposes of religion. Let your reasonings be never so forcible and convincing, let your language be never so clear and intelligible, yet if the whole discourse glide over the ears in a smooth and delightful stream, and if nothing be fixed in the memory, the sermon is in great danger of being lost and fruitless. Now to avoid this danger, I would recommend to you the care of a clear and distinct method, and let this method appear to the hearers, by the division of your discourses into several plain and distinct particulars, so that the whole may not be a mere

loose harangue, without evident members and discernible rests and pauses. Whatsoever proper and natural divisions belong to your subject, mark them out by the numbers 1st, 2d, 3d, &c. This will afford you time to breathe, in the delivery of your discourse, and give your hearers a short season for recollection of the particulars which have been mentioned before.

But in this matter take care always to maintain a happy medium, so as never to arise to such a number of particulars as may make your sermon look like a tree full of branches in the winter, without the beautiful and profitable appearance of leaves and fruit. Cast the scheme of your discourse into some distinct general heads, and lesser subdivisions in your first sketches and rudiments of it: This will greatly assist you in the amplification; this will help you to preserve a just method throughout, and secure you from repeating the same thoughts too often: This will enable you to commit your sermon to your own memory the better, that you may deliver it with ease, and it will greatly assist the understanding as well as the memory of all that hear you. It will furnish them with matter and method for an easy recollection at home, for meditation in their devout retirement, and for religious conference or rehearsal after the public worship is ended.

Consider again, your business is with the consciences, and wills, and affections of men. A mere conviction of the reason and judgment, by the strongest arguments, is hardly sufficient, in matters of piety and virtue, to command the will into obedience; because the appetites of the flesh and the interests of this world are engaged on the opposite side. It is a very common case with the sons and daughters of Adam, to see and know their proper duty, and to have the reasons that enforce it fresh in their memory; and yet the powerful efforts of *the flesh and the world* withhold the will from the practice, forbid its holy resolutions for God and heaven, or keep them always feeble, doubtful and wavering. The God of nature, therefore, has furnished mankind with those powers which we call passions, or affections of the heart, in order to excite the will with superior vigor and activity to avoid the evil and pursue the good. Upon this account, the preacher must learn to address the passions in a proper manner, and I cannot but think it a very imperfect character of a Christian preacher, that he reasons well upon every subject, and talks clearly upon his text, if he has nothing of the pathetic in his ministrations, no talent at all to strike the passions of the heart.

Awaken your spirit, therefore, in your compositions, contrive all lively, forcible, and penetrating forms of speech, to make your

words powerful and impressive on the hearts of your hearers, when light is first let into the mind. Practise all the awful and solemn ways of address to the conscience, all the soft and tender influences on the heart. Try all methods to rouse and awaken the cold, the stupid, the sleepy race of sinners; learn all the language of holy jealousy and terror, to affright the presumptuous; all the compassionate and encouraging manners of speaking, to comfort, encourage, and direct the awakened, the penitent, the willing, and the humble; all the winning and engaging modes of discourse and expostulation, to constrain the hearers of every character to attend. Seek this happy skill of reigning and triumphing over the hearts of an assembly; persuade them with power to love and practise all the important duties of godliness, in opposition to the flesh and the world; endeavor to kindle the soul to zeal in the holy warfare, and to make it bravely victorious over all the enemies of its salvation. But in all these efforts of sacred oratory, remember still you are a minister of the gospel of Christ; and as your style must not affect the pomp and magnificence of the theatre, so neither should you borrow your expressions or your metaphors from the coarsest occupations, or any of the mean and uncleanly occurrences in life. Swell not the sound of your periods with ambitious or pedantic phrases; dress not your serious discourses to the people in too glittering array, with an affectation of gaudy and flaunting ornaments, nor ever descend to so low a degree of familiarity and meanness, as to sink your language below the dignity of your subject or your office.

IX. As the art of reasoning, and the happy skill of persuasion, are both necessary to be used in framing your discourses, so both of them may be borrowed in a good measure from the holy Scriptures. The word of God will furnish you with a rich variety of forms both to prove and persuade. Clear instruction, convincing argument, and pathetic address to the heart, may be all drawn from the sacred writers. Many fine strokes of true logic and rhetoric are scattered through that divine book, the Bible: Words of force and elegance to charm and allure the soul, glitter and sparkle like golden ore in some peculiar parts of it. You may find there noble examples of the awful and compassionate style, and inimitable patterns of the terrible and the tender. Shall I therefore take the freedom once again to call upon you to remember that you are a minister of the word of God, a professor and preacher of the Bible, and not a mere philosopher upon the foot of reason, nor an orator in a heathen school? I am not here directing you to compose your whole sermons of nothing else but a perpetual

connection of texts of Scripture ; nor to spend the whole hour in running from one text to another, as a concordance, or the margin shall point them out. Persons of low degrees of learning, who give themselves up to this method, have frequently introduced portions of Scripture in their discourses, in a sense which the holy writers never thought of, and which the Spirit of God never designed ; and yet if a learned man would happily explain the more difficult parts of the word of God, perhaps it would be generally best done, and especially in the pulpit, by comparing them with other texts which are more plain and easy. Scripture is the best interpreter of itself.

As for argument to confirm a doctrine or enforce a duty, you may borrow much of this from the word of God. It is true, when we speak of those subjects which belong to natural religion, we may very properly bring arguments from the nature of God and man, and from the reason of things, to shew how necessary and reasonable it is to believe such a truth, or to practise such a virtue ; nor is the Scripture itself barren of such reasonings, and even in the peculiar articles of Christianity, it is a most excellent and useful design, now and then, to shew how consistent and harmonious they are with reason, and how worthy of our faith and practice, since the word of God has revealed them, though they could not be found out by the light of nature. Yet these arguments, if they are long and labored, and not immediately apprehended by the mind, are much more proper to be communicated to the world by writing than by speaking ; there the reader may review and dwell upon an argument till he has grasped the whole chain, and admits all the connected inferences, and sees undoubted evidence of the conclusion : But reasonings in the pulpit, for the most part, should be short and easy, that they may strike conviction into the mind almost as soon as they strike the ear, unless your hearers were all men of learning and refined education.

But the bulk of our auditors, whether in the city or country, are not much profited by sermons merely made up of rational proofs of any doctrine or duty, deeply and laboriously deduced from the original springs and prime nature of things. They do not find their minds so much enlightened, nor their hearts warmed by the tedious train of connected inferences that are fetched from distant principles of nature and philosophy. This method, I confess, may entertain a few of the more rational, the more learned, or more polite persons in an auditory, who can survey and comprehend the sense of such discourses, and feel the force of such long chains of argumentation ; and these persons, I own, ought to have due re-

spect paid them in some parts of our ministry. Yet it is not the great business of a preacher of the gospel only to please the few, but *to become all things to all men*, and, if possible, to win a multitude of souls to Christ. The generality of our hearers have their lives filled up with the business of their station, and have little leisure or advantage to improve their understandings in the art of deep reasoning. These will yawn and nod, and grow weary of the sermon; nor will such a preacher (though his discourses are never so much labored) profit the assembly, any more than please them, if he goes on resolutely in this way: Such a minister will quickly despise his hearers, and they will soon be tired with their preacher; and if some providence does not remove him to another congregation, or if he does not betake himself to some other business of life, he will be tempted to forsake the Protestant dissenters, and throw himself into the established church, when he has persuaded his conscience to comply with the imposed terms of ministerial conformity.

I grant it is necessary to use good reason through your whole discourse, and connect all the parts of it with justice: But, as I hinted before, let your arguments to prove any point be generally short and easy, and within the grasp of a common understanding: Remember that a few plain and obvious reasonings, from familiar and well-known principles, and some clear and well-chosen texts of Scripture, with a word or two to explain or apply them to the understanding and conscience of men with light and zeal, will impress the judgment and pierce the heart with more speedy and powerful conviction; and our hearers, who regard a plain scriptural argument as *the word of the living God*, will much more readily receive it, and submit much sooner to the force and authority of it. *Thus saith the prophet*, or *thus saith the apostle*, carries greater weight with it, both to convince and to persuade, than a long series of demonstrations from remote principles, though they should be firm and strong as those of Euclid or Sir Isaac Newton.

And as for bright, warm, and pathetic language, to strike the imagination or to affect the heart, to kindle the divine passions or to melt the soul, there is none of the heathen orators can better furnish you than the moving expostulations of the ancient prophets, the tender and sprightly odes of holy David, or the affectionate part of the letters of St. Paul, which even his enemies in the church of Corinth confess to be powerful. The Eastern writers, among whom we number the Jews, were particularly famous for lively oratory, for bright images, and bold animated figures of speech. Could I have heard Isaiah or Jeremy pronouncing some of their

sermons, or attended St. Paul in some of his pathetic strains of preaching, I should never mourn a want of acquaintance with Tully or Demosthenes.

A preacher whose mind is well stored and enriched with the divine sense and sentiments, the reasoning and the language of Scripture (and especially if these are wrought into his heart by Christian experience), supposing his other talents are equal to those of his brethren, will always have a considerable advantage over them in composing such discourses as shall be most popular and most useful in Christian assemblies; and he may better expect the presence and blessing of God, to make his word triumph over the souls of men, and will generally speak to their hearts with more power for their eternal salvation. Shew me one sinner turned to God and holiness by the labors of a Christian preacher, who is generally entertaining the audience with a long and weighty chain of reasoning from the principles of nature, and teaching virtue in the language of heathen philosophy: And I think I may undertake to shew you ten who have been convinced and converted, and have become holy persons and lively Christians by an attendance upon a scriptural, affectionate, and experimental ministry: The whole assembly hang attentive upon the lips of a man who speaks to the heart as well as the understanding, and who can enforce his exhortations from a manifold experience of the success of them. They delight to hear the preacher whose plain and powerful addresses to the conscience, and whose frequent methods of reasoning in the pulpit, have been drawn from what they themselves have read in Scripture concerning God and man, sin and duty, our misery and divine mercy, death, resurrection, judgment, heaven, and hell. They attend with holy reverence and affection on such a minister, whose frequent arguments both in points of doctrine and practice is, *Thus saith the Lord.*

X. *Be not slothful* or negligent in your weekly preparations for the pulpit: Take due time for it. Begin so early in the week that you may have time enough before you to finish your preparations well, and always allow for accidental occurrences, either from indisposition of body, from interruptions by company, from unforeseen business or trouble, &c. that you may not be reduced to the necessity of hurrying over your work in haste at the end of the week, and serving God and the souls of men with poor, cold, and careless performances. Remember that awful word, though spoken on another occasion, Jer. xlvi. 10. *Cursed be he that doth the work of the Lord deceitfully.* Manage so as to leave generally the Saturday evening, or at least the Lord's-day morning, entire for the

review and correction of your discourse, and for your own spiritual improvement by the sermon which you have prepared for the people.

If it should happen that the mere providence of God, without any neglect of yours, has hindered you from making so good a preparation as you designed, you may with courage, and hope of divine assistance, venture into the assembly with more slender and imperfect furniture: But if your conscience tells you that your preparations are very slight, and the neglect is all your own, you have less reason to expect aids from above without great humiliation for your negligence. And what if God should forsake you so far in the pulpit, as to expose you to public shame, and thus punish you for your carelessness in the midst of the congregation?

Study your matter well by meditation and reading, and comparing Scriptures together, till you have gotten it completely within your grasp and survey: Then if you should happen to be so situated in preaching, that you could not refresh your memory by the inspection of your paper every minute, yet you will not be exposed to hurry and confusion; a ready thought will suggest something pertinent to your purpose. Let your preparations be usually so perfect that you may be able to fill up the time allotted for the discourse with solid sense and proper language, even if your natural spirits should happen to be heavy and indisposed at the hour of preaching, and if your mind should have no new thoughts arising in the delivery of your discourse. Labor carefully in the formation of your sermons in younger years: A habit of thinking and speaking well, procured by the studies of youth, will make the labor of your middle age easy, when perhaps you will have much less time and leisure. This shall suffice for the second general head, which exhorts you to take heed to your private studies, both those which may furnish you for the work of the ministry in general, and those which are necessary to your particular preparations for the pulpit.

### SECTION III.—OF PUBLIC MINISTRATIONS.

We proceed now to the third general head, and that is, Take heed to your public labors and ministrations in the church, which may be done by attending to the following particulars:

I. Apply yourself to your work with pious delight; not as a toil and task, which you wish were done and ended, but as a matter of inward pleasure to your own soul: Enter the pulpit with the solemnity of holy joy, that you have an opportunity to speak for the honor of God, and the salvation of men. Then you will not preach

or pray with sloth or laziness, with coldness or indifference : We do not use to be slothful and indifferent in the pursuit of our joys, or the relish of our chosen pleasures. Stir up yourself to the work with sacred vigor, that the assembly may feel what you speak. But if you deliver the most solemn and lively composes like a man that is half asleep, it will be no wonder if your hearers slumber. A dull preacher makes a drowsy church.

II. Endeavor to get your heart into a temper of divine love, zealous for the laws of God, affected with the grace of Christ, and compassionate for the souls of men. With this temper engage in public work. Let your frame of spirit be holy with regard to your own inward devotion, near to God, and delighting in him ; and let it be zealous for the name of Christ, and the increase of his kingdom. O pity perishing sinners when you are sent to invite them to be reconciled to God. Let not self be the subject or the end of your preaching, but Christ and the salvation of souls. *We preach not ourselves*, saith the apostle, *but Christ Jesus the Lord, and ourselves your servants for Jesus' sake*; 2 Cor. iv. 5. Speak as a dying preacher to dying hearers, with the utmost compassion to the ignorant, the tempted, the foolish, and the obstinate ; for all these are in danger of eternal death. Attend your work with the utmost desire to save souls from hell, and enlarge the kingdom of Christ your Lord. Go into the public assembly with a design (if God please) to strike and persuade some souls there into repentance, faith, holiness and salvation. Go to *open blind eyes, to unstopp deaf ears, to make the lame walk*, to make the foolish wise, *to raise those that are dead in trespasses and sins* to a heavenly and divine life, and to bring guilty rebels to return to the love and obedience of their Maker, by Jesus Christ, the great Reconciler, that they may be pardoned and saved. Go to diffuse the savor of the name of Christ and his gospel through a whole assembly, and to allure souls to partake of his grace and glory.

III. Go forth in *the strength of Christ*, for these glorious effects are above your own strength, and transcend all the powers of the brightest preachers. *Be strong in the grace which is in Christ Jesus*; 2 Tim. ii. 1. *Without him we can do nothing*; John xv. 5. Go with a design to work wonders of salvation on sinful creatures, but in the strength of Jesus, *who hath all power given him in heaven and earth, and hath promised to be with his ministers to the end of the world*; Matt. xxviii. 20. Pray earnestly for the promised aids of the Spirit, and plead with God who hath sent you forth in the service of the gospel of his Son, that you may not return empty, but bring in a fair harvest of converts to heaven. It is *the Lord*

*of the harvest who only can give this divine success to the laborers. He that planteth is nothing, and he that watereth is nothing, but all our hope is in God, who giveth the increase ; 1 Cor. iii. 7.*

IV. Get the substance of your sermon, which you have prepared for the pulpit, so wrought into your head and heart by review and meditation, that you may have it at command, and speak to your hearers with freedom ; not as if you were reading or repeating your lesson to them, but as a man sent to teach and persuade them to faith and holiness. Deliver your discourses to the people like a man that is talking to them in good earnest about their most important concerns, and their everlasting welfare ; like a messenger sent from heaven who would fain save sinners from hell, and allure souls to God and happiness. Do not indulge that lazy way of reading over your prepared paper, as a schoolboy does an oration out of Livy or Cicero, who has no concern in the things he speaks. But let all the warmest zeal for God, and compassion for perishing men, animate your voice and countenance ; and let the people see and feel, as well as hear, that you are speaking to them about things of infinite moment, and in which your own eternal interest lies as well as theirs.

V. If you pray and hope for the assistance of the Spirit of God in every part of your work, do not resolve always to confine yourself precisely to the mere words and sentences which you have written down in your private preparations. Far be it from me to encourage a preacher to venture into public work without due preparation by study, and a regular composure of his discourse. We must not *serve God with what cost us nothing*. All our wisest thoughts and cares are due to the sacred service of the temple : But what I mean is, that we should not impose upon ourselves just such a number of pre-composed words and lines to be delivered in the hour, without daring to speak a warm sentiment that comes fresh upon the mind. Why may you not hope for some lively turns of thought, some new pious sentiments which may strike light and heat, and life into the understandings and the hearts of those that hear you ? In the zeal of your ministrations, why may you not expect some bright, and warm, and pathetic forms of argument and persuasion, to offer themselves to your lips, for the more powerful conviction of sinners, and the encouragement and comfort of humble Christians ? Have you not often found such an enlargement of thought, such a variety of sentiment and freedom of speech, in common conversation upon an important subject, beyond what you were apprized of beforehand ? And why should you forbid

yourself this natural advantage in the pulpit, and in the fervor of sacred ministrations, where also you have more reason to hope for divine assistance ?

Besides, for us who are Protestant dissenters, and confine ourselves to no set forms of prayer, it seems more unreasonable to confine our lips constantly and precisely to the words written in our papers in the work of preaching. Do we plead so earnestly for the liberty of prayer, and yet never give our spirits a liberty to express their present warm, lively, and affectionate thoughts, in ministering the gospel of Christ under the hopes of his assistance ? Why must we never dare to add any thing to our premeditated notes in speaking to the people, while we take this freedom in speaking to the blessed God ? As there has been many a fervent and devout petition offered to God in our addresses to him which has not been thought of before, so many a sentence that was never written has been delivered in our addresses to the people with glorious success ; it has come more immediate and warm from the heart, and may have been blessed of God to save a soul.

VI. Here would be a proper place to interpose a few directions concerning elocution, and the whole manner of delivery of your discourse to the people ; which includes both a voice, gesture, and behavior suited to the subject and design of every part of the sermon. But the rules that are necessary for this part of our work are much better derived from books written on this subject, from an observation of the best preachers, in order to imitate them, and an avoidance of that which we find offensive when we ourselves are hearers. Besides, as I have had an opportunity sometimes, my dear brother, of attending your performances in public, I think I may be bold to say, that in this, as well as in several other parts of your ministration, you stand in no need of any advice I can give. But since you have called me at present to this service, I have endeavored to fulfil it. If I had a design to go through the whole of the ministerial office, I should here also find a proper place to speak of the manner of your performance of public prayer, of your direction of the person who leads that part of worship which is called psalmody, and in your ministration of the ordinances of baptism and the Lord's-supper ; but this would require much more time, and my chief design was to put you in mind of a few useful things which relate to preaching. I proceed, therefore, to the last particular.

VII. Be very solicitous about the success of all your labors in the pulpit. Water the seed sown, not only with public but secret prayer. Plead with God importunately, that he would not suffer you

to labor in vain. Be not like that foolish bird the *Ostrich, which lays her eggs in the dust, and leaves them there, regardless whether they come to life or not*: *God hath not given her understanding*; Job xxxix. 14–17. But let not this folly be your character or practice: Labor, and watch, and pray, that your sermons and the fruit of your studies may become words of divine life to souls.

It is an observation of pious Mr. Baxter's, which I have read somewhere in his works, that he has never known any considerable success from the brightest and noblest talents, nor the most excellent kind of preaching; and that even where the preachers themselves have been truly religious, if they have not had a solicitous concern for the success of their ministrations. Let the awful and important thoughts of souls being saved by my preaching, or left to perish and be condemned to hell by my negligence, I say, let this awful and tremendous thought dwell ever upon your spirit. We are made *watchmen to the house of Israel, as Ezekiel was*; Ezek. iii. 17, etc., and if we give no warning of approaching danger, the souls of multitudes may perish through our neglect, but the blood of souls will be terribly required at our hands.

#### SECTION IV.—OF THE CONVERSATION OF A MINISTER.

We are come now to the fourth and last thing which I proposed, in order to the fulfilling of your ministry, *viz.* Take heed to your whole conversation in the world; let that be managed not only as becomes a professor of Christianity, but as becomes a minister of the gospel of Christ. Now, amongst other rules which may render your conversation agreeable to your character, I entreat you to take these few into your thoughts:

I. Let it be blameless and inoffensive. *Be vigilant, be temperate in all things, not only as a soldier of Christ, but as an under-leader of part of his army.* *Be temperate, and abstain sometimes even from lawful delights, that you may make the work of self-denial easy, and that you may bear hardship as becomes a soldier;* 2 Tim. ii. 3, 4. *Be watchful or vigilant, lest you be too much entangled with the affairs of this life, that you may better please him who has chosen you for an officer in his battalions, and that you may not be easily surprised into the snares of sin.* Guard against a love of pleasure, a sensual temper, an indulgence of appetite, an excessive relish of wine or dainties; this carnalizes the soul, and gives occasion to the world to reproach us but too justly.

Watch carefully in all your conduct that you give no offence, as far as possible, neither to Jew or Gentile, nor to the church of God,

*that so the ministry may not be blamed ; 1 Cor. x. 32. 2 Cor. vi.*  
3. Maintain a holy jealousy over yourself and your conduct, *that the name of Christ and his gospel suffer not the reproach of tongues and impious blasphemies through your means.* Oh, how dreadful is the mischief that a scandalous minister does to the gospel of our blessed Lord ! What a fearful train of consequences may attend his indulgence of any sinful appetite, or any single criminal action, even though it be not repeated ! What a fatal stumbling-block does he lay before the feet of saints and sinners ! He turns away the heart of sinners from God and religion, who perhaps begin to think of setting their faces toward heaven : He discourages the hearts of young Christians, and weakens the hands of all the friends of Christ. *Woe be to the preacher by whom such offences come.*

II. Let your conversation be exemplary in all the duties of holiness and virtue, in all the instances of worship and piety toward God, and in those of justice, honor, and hearty benevolence toward men. Be forward and ready to engage in every good word and work, that you may be a pattern and a leader of the flock, that you may be able to address the people committed to your care in the language of the blessed apostle, *Be ye followers of me, even as I also am of Christ ; 1 Cor. xi. 1. Brethren, be followers together of me, and mark them which walk so as ye have us for an example. For our conversation is in heaven ; Phil. iii. 17-20. Those things which ye have both learned and received, and heard and seen in me, do you practise, and the God of peace be with you ; Phil. iv. 9.*

III. Let your conversation be grave and manly, yet pleasant and engaging. Let it be grave, manly, and venerable : Remember your station in the church, that you sink not into levity and vain trifling, that you indulge not any ridiculous humors, or childish follies below the dignity of your character : Keep up the honor of your office among men by a remarkable sanctity of manners, by a decent and manly deportment. Remember that our station does not permit any of us to set up for a buffoon ; nor will it be any glory to us to excel in farce and comedy. Let others obtain the honor of being good jesters, and of having it in their power to spread a laugh round the company when they please : But let it be our ambition to act on the stage of life as men who are devoted to the service of the God of heaven, to the real benefit of mankind on earth, and to their eternal interests.

Yet there is no need that your behavior should have any thing stiff or haughty, any thing sullen or gloomy in it : There is an art of pleasing in conversation that will maintain the honor of a

superior office without a morose silence, without an affected stiffness, and without a haughty superiority. A pleasant story may proceed without offence from a minister's lips; but he should never aim at the title of a man of mirth, nor abound in such tales as carry no useful instruction in them, no lessons of piety, or wisdom, or virtue. Let a cheerful freedom, a generous friendship, and an innocent pleasure, generally appear on your countenance; and let your speech be ever kind and affectionate. Do not put on any forbidding airs, nor let the humblest soul be afraid to speak to you. Let your whole carriage be civil and affable; let your address to men be usually open and free, such as may allure persons to be open and free with you in the important concerns of their souls. Seek as far as possible to obtain all your pious designs, by soft and gentle methods of persuasion.

If you are ever called to the unpleasing and painful work of reproof, this may be done effectually upon some occasions without speaking a word. When vicious, or uncleanly, or unbecoming speeches arise in public conversation, a sudden silence, with an assumed gravity, will often be a sensible and a sufficient reproof. Or where words of admonition may not be proper, because of the company, sometimes a sudden departure may be the best way to acquaint them with your disapprobation. But there are cases wherein such a tacit rebuke is not sufficient to answer your character and your office. Sometimes it is necessary for a minister to bear a public and express witness against shocking immorality, or against vile and impious discourse. Yet in general it must be said, *if a reproof can be given in secret*, it is best and most likely to prevail upon the offender, because it less irritates his passions, nor awakens his pride to vindicate himself, and to despise all reproof.

Whosoever Providence calls you to this work, make it appear to the transgressor, that you do it with regret and pain; let him see that you are not giving vent to your own wrath, but seeking his interest and welfare; and that were it not for the honor of God, and for his good, you would gladly excuse yourself from the ungrateful task; and that it is a work on which your spirit takes no delight. If the case and circumstances require some speeches that are awful and severe, let it appear still that your love and pity are the prevailing passions, and that even your anger has something divine and holy in it, as being raised and pointed against the sin rather than against the sinner. Study to make the whole of your carriage and discourse amongst men so engaging, as may invite strangers to love you, and allure them to love religion for your sake.

IV. In order to attain the same end, let your conversation be attended with much self-denial and meekness; avoid the character of a humorist, nor be unreasonably fond of little things, nor peevish for the want of them. Suppress rising passion early. If you are providentially led into argument and dispute, whether on themes of belief or practice, be very watchful lest you run into fierce contention, into angry and noisy debate. Guard against every word that savors of malice, or of bitter strife; watch against the first stirrings of sudden wrath or resentment; bear with patience the contradiction of others, and *forbear to return railing for railing.* *A minister must be gentle, and not apt to strive, but meekly instructing gainsayers.* He should never be ready either to give or take offence, but he should teach his people to neglect and bury resentment, to be deaf to reproaches, and to forgive injuries by his own example, *even as God has forgiven all of us.* Let us imitate his divine pattern, who cancels and forgives our infinite offences *for the sake of Jesus Christ.* *A bishop must not be a brawler or a striker;* 1 Tim. iii. 3. but such as the apostle was, *gentle among the people, even as a nurse cherishes her children; and being affectionately desirous of their welfare, we should be willing to impart not only the gospel of God to them,* but any thing that is dear to us, for the salvation of their souls; 1 Thess. ii 7, 8.

Never suffer any differences (if possible) to arise between you and any of the people who are committed to your care, or attend on your ministrations: This will endanger the success of your best labors among them, and for this reason, though you visit families with freedom, yet avoid all unnecessary enquiries into their domestic affairs by a prying curiosity; the pleasure of such secrets will never pay for the danger that attends them, and your own business is sufficient for you. Avoid entering into any of the little private and personal quarrels that may arise among them, unless *Providence* give you an evident call to become a *peacemaker:* But even in this blessed work there is some danger of disobliging one side or the other; for though both sides are often to blame, yet each supposes himself so much in the right, that your softest and most candid intimation of their being culpable, even in little things, will sometimes awaken the jealousy of one or both parties against you; this will tend to abate their esteem of you, and give a coldness to their attention on your sacred services. We had need be *wise as serpents in this case, and harmless as doves;* Matt. x. 16.

V. Let your conversation be as fruitful and edifying as your station and opportunities will allow. Wheresoever you come, endeavor (if possible) that the world may be the better for you. If it be the

duty of every Christian, much more is it the indispensable duty of a minister of Christ, to take heed that *no corrupt communication proceed out of his mouth, but that which is good for edification, that it may minister grace to the hearers*; Eph. iv. 29. In your private visits to the members of your flocks, or to the houses of those who attend on your ministry, depart not (if possible) without putting in some word for God and religion, for Christ and his gospel: Take occasion, from common occurrences that arise, artfully and insensibly to introduce some discourse of things sacred. Let it be done with prudence and holy skill, that the company may be led into it ere they are aware. The ingenious Mr. Norris's little Discourse of Religious Conversation, and Mr. Matthew Henry's Sermon of Friendly Visits, have many excellent and valuable hints in them for our use.

It is to be confessed, that the best of ministers and Christians sometimes fall into such company, that it is hardly possible to speak a word for God and the gospel among them. Try then whether you can lead the discourse to some useful theme in matters of science, art, and ingenuity, or to rules of prudence, morality, or human conduct. *There is a time of keeping silence, and restraining our lips as with a bridle, even from every thing that is piously good, while some sort of wicked men stand before us*; Psalm xxxix. i 2. The best men are sometimes *dumb with silence*, and dare not speak of God or religion, lest they should *cast their pearls before swine, and give their holy things to dogs*; and lest they should provoke the unclean or the envious animals to foam out their impurities or to *turn again and rend them*. But I doubt this caution has been carried much farther by our own cowardice, carnality of spirit, than David ever practised it in the xxxix. Psalm, or than Jesus Christ, meant it in the vii. of Matthew. Let us take heed then that we abuse not this prudent caution to a manifest neglect of our duty, and to withhold our lips from the things of God, where Providence gives us a fair opportunity to speak of them.

Now and then take occasion to speak a kind and religious word to the children of the household; put them in mind of avoiding some childish folly, or of practising some duty that belongs to their age. Let your memory be well furnished with words of Scripture, suited to the several ages of mankind, as well as to the various occasions of life, that *out of the abundance of the heart your mouth may speak* to the advantage of all that hear you, and particularly improve the younger parts of mankind, who are the hopes of the next generation. Make the lambs of the flock love you, and hear your voice with delight, that they may grow up

under your instruction, to fill up the room of their fathers when they are called away to heaven; Nor let servants be utterly neglected, where Providence may afford you an opportunity to speak a word to their souls.

Learn what are the spiritual circumstances of the families whom you visit, and address them with a word in season, where you can have proper opportunity. Converse personally with them (if you can) about their eternal concerns. Let the ease and gentleness of your addresses to them, in a natural and familiar way, take off all that shy and bashful tincture from their minds, that is ready to prevent their uttering a word about the concern of their souls. Enquire tenderly into their state with regard to God: Draw sinners by words of compassion to repent of their crimes, to return to God, and to trust in Jesus the Saviour. Teach Christians sincerely to love and practise duty, and to endure with honor the trials of life. Teach them to be sick and die as becomes the disciples of Christ. Treasure up your own experiences of divine things, not only as matters of delightful review in your own retirements, and for the encouragement of your own hope, but as lessons to be taught your people upon all proper occasions. *Whether you are afflicted, or whether you are comforted, let it be for their consolation and salvation;* 2 Cor. i. 6.

A minister, whose business and known employment is to speak of the things of God, should never be ashamed to impart divine knowledge, or to exhort to holiness with his lips, and to preach the word of the gospel of grace, whether the world calls it *in season or out of season*; 2 Tim. iv. 1. He that has the happy talent of parlor preaching, has sometimes done more for Christ and souls in the space of a few minutes, than by the labor of many hours and days in the usual course of preaching in the pulpit. Our character should be all of a piece, and we should help forward the success of our public ministrations by our private addresses to the hearts and consciences of men, where Providence favors us with just occasions.

In order to promote this work of particular watchfulness over the flock of Christ, where he has made you a shepherd and overseer, it is useful to keep a catalogue of their names, and now and then review them with a pastoral eye and affection. This will awaken and incline you to lift up proper petitions for each of them, so far as you are acquainted with their circumstances in body or mind. This will excite you to give thanks to God on account of those who *walk as become the gospel*, and who have either begun, or proceeded and increased in the Christian life and temper by your ministry: You will observe the names of the neg-

ligent and backsliding Christians, to mourn over them, and admonish them: You will be put in mind how to dispose of your time in Christian visits, and learn the better to fulfil your whole ministry among them.

I shall enlarge no further in the enumeration of our duties, which would easily swell into a volume, if they were set before our eyes in their full extent: But in general I say, these are the methods whereby we must take heed to ourselves, if we would fulfil the ministry that we have received of Christ. To supply what I have omitted, read frequently, and with holy attention, the epistles of Paul to Timothy and Titus, which will furnish you richly with directions for your work; and I would recommend to you the examples of St. Paul and Timothy, as they are put well together in a little book by the Reverend Mr. Murray, which was printed but a few years ago. And as the account of the lives of many ancient ministers may furnish us with patterns for our imitation, so the life of the late venerable Dr. Cotton Mather, of New England, has many excellent hints in it for this purpose; *Chap. ii. Sect. 1.* and *Chap. vi.*

#### SECTION V.—A SOLEMN ENFORCEMENT OF THESE EXHORTATIONS ON THE CONSCIENCE.

The things which I have spoken hitherto have been a display of the best methods I can think of, for the execution of the sacred office of the ministry: And so far as they are conformable to the word of God, we may venture to say these are your duties, my dear brother, and these are ours. It remains now to be considered, in what manner shall we enforce them on our own consciences, and on yours. What solemn obtestations shall I use to press these momentous concerns on all our hearts? What pathetic language shall I choose, what words of awful efficacy and divine fervor, which may first melt our spirits into softness, and then imprint the duties upon them with lasting power? We exhort and charge you, we exhort and charge ourselves, by all that is serious and sacred, by all that is important and everlasting, by all the solemn transactions between God and man which are past, and by all the more solemn and awful scenes which are yet to come, by all things in our holy religion which are dreadful and tremendous, and by all things in this gospel which are glorious and amiable, heavenly and divine; we charge you by all that is written in this book of God, according to which we shall be judged in the last day, by all the infinite and astonishing glories and terrors of an invisible world and an unseen

eternity, we charge and exhort you, we exhort and charge ourselves, that we all *take heed to the ministry which we have received of the Lord Jesus that we fulfil it.* But let us descend to more particular forms of solemn exhortation, which perhaps may strike our consciences in a more sensible manner, and print the duties deeper upon our hearts.

*First* then, we exhort and charge you, we charge and exhort our own souls, by all the ancient transactions between God the Father and his Son Jesus Christ, for the salvation of sinful men, by all the eternal counsels of peace that passed between them to recover lost mankind to the favor and image of his Maker, that we preach this gospel with faithfulness, and be instant in the sacred work. It is the effect of these divine counsels that we publish to sinners; it is the merciful product of this sacred covenant of redemption that we are sent to proclaim to a lost world: This is the gospel that is put into our hands: God grant we may speak as becomes creatures entrusted with messages of such a heavenly original, with affairs of such divine solemnity.

*Secondly*, We exhort and charge you, and we would charge ourselves to fulfil our ministry, by the invaluable treasure of this gospel which is put into our hands, by that word of life which is committed to our ministration. *Let us speak* with such a serious zeal as becomes the oracles of God and the embassies of his mercy, with such compassion to dying souls as is manifested in this gospel of love, with such inward fervor and holy solicitude for the success of our labors, that if it were possible, not the soul of one sinner within the reach of our preaching might miss of this pardoning mercy and eternal joy. Oh let us not dare to trifle with God or men: Let us not dare be cold and lifeless in pronouncing the words of everlasting life, nor lazy nor indolent in carrying these errands of divine love to a lost and perishing world.

*Thirdly*, We charge and beseech you, and we charge ourselves, by the mercies of the living God, which we hope both you and we have tasted, by the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, which we hope we have felt and received, that you and we proclaim these mercies with a sacred zeal, and that in the name of God and of our Lord Jesus, we offer them to a miserable world with holy importunity. If ever we have known this wondrous compassion of God to ourselves, if ever we have tasted that the Lord is gracious, let us remember the relish we have had of this infinite compassion and condescending grace, when we were perishing under the power and guilt of sin; and with an imitation of that divine piety, let us entreat sinners to be saved. Let us remember all the alluring

charms, the heavenly sweetness of forgiving, sanctifying, and saving grace ; and do our utmost to set them all before sinners in the most inviting light, that we may win sinful men to accept of the same salvation.

*Fourthly,* We exhort and charge you, and we charge ourselves, by the dear and glorious *name of our blessed Jesus, whose servants we are*, whose name we bear, whose authority gives us commission, and who hath chosen us to be the ministers of his grace, the messengers of his dying love to the sons of men : We charge and beseech you to take care of the honor of his name in your ministrations, for we are sent forth to display before the eyes of the world the unsearchable riches of Christ. We are entrusted to spread abroad the honor of his name ; O let us labor and strive that our zeal bear some proportion to the dignity of our trust, and let us take heed that we do nothing unworthy of our great and glorious Master in heaven, who dwells *at the right hand of God* ; nothing unworthy of that holy and illustrious name, in which we are sent forth to preach this gospel, and to enlarge his kingdom. He has set us up as lights upon a hill in this sinful world, this benighted part of his dominion ; let us burn and shine to his honor. He has assumed and placed us as stars in his right hand ; let us shine and burn gloriously, that we may give light to a midnight world. O that we may point out to them *the morning star*, that we may bring them under the beams of the rising *sun of righteousness*, and guide them in the way to the hills of paradise and everlasting joy !

*Fifthly,* We beseech and charge you, while we charge ourselves, by the inestimable value of *the blood of Christ*, which purchased this salvation, that you and we display this illustrious and costly purchase to sinful perishing creatures ; this precious blood, which is sufficient to redeem a world from death, and which is the price of all our infinite and everlasting blessings, demands that we publish and offer them in his name, with holy zeal and solicitude to sinful men. Oh may our heart and our lips join to proclaim this redemption, this salvation, these everlasting blessings, with such a devout and sacred passion as becomes the divine price that was paid for them ! Let us not be found triflers with the blood of Christ, nor let us bring cold hearts and dead affections, when we come to set before sinners the rich and inestimable stream of that life and blood that comes warm from the heart of the dying Son of God. Let perishing creatures know that it cost the Prince of Glory such a dreadful price as this to redeem them from eternal misery ; and at the same time let our own spirits feel the powerful workings of gratitude to the divine friend that bled and died

for us, and let our language make it appear that we speak what we feel.

*Sixthly,* We entreat you with all tenderness, and with holy solemnity and fear, we charge you, and we charge ourselves, by the invaluable worth of perishing souls, that we fulfil all our ministry with a concern of heart equal to so important a case. How can we dare to speak with lifeless lips, with cold language, or a careless air, when we are sent to recover immortal souls from the brink of everlasting death? Oh let it never be said that such or such a soul was lost for ever through our carelessness, through our coldness, through our sinful sloth in publishing the offers of recovering grace! How tremendous and painful will such a thought be to our hearts! How dreadful the anguish of it to the awakened conscience of a drowsy preacher.

*Seventhly,* We charge you solemnly, and we charge ourselves, by the honor that Christ has done to us in times past, and has done to you this day, by the dignity of that office with which we have been formerly invested, and which you have this day received, that neither you nor we do any thing unbecoming this honorable character. Does Jesus, the divine Shepherd, appoint us under-shepherds of his flock: are we constituted *stewards* in his house, to dispense the mysteries of his grace, and the good things of his gospel; are we the *messengers* of our risen Lord to a dying world; are we the *ministers* of our exalted Saviour in his kingdom here below; are we the *stars in his right hand*; are we the earthly *angels in his churches*? Oh let us take heed that we do nothing to disgrace the titles of dignity and honor which he has put upon us in his word; Let us remember that every dignity brings an equal duty with it: and by fulfilling the various and difficult duties of our holy station, let us make it appear that our office was not conferred upon us in vain. It behoves us well to remember, that a blemish upon the name of a minister, arising from his own criminal conduct, brings a foul and lasting scandal upon the office itself, and upon the gospel of our glorified Lord, in whose name we act: And he will not fail to resent it.

*Eighthly,* We exhort and charge you therefore, my dear brother, by all the sacred solemnities of this day, by the vows of God which you have this day taken upon yourself, and *the bond wherewith you have bound your soul*; and we would each of us charge our own consciences, by our own former solemn vows, that neither you nor we ever suffer ourselves to forget or disregard our holy and powerful engagements; that we be awake at all times to fulfil our work, and that we never indulge low and trifling thoughts of what has

formerly appeared to us, and what this day appears to you of such awful importance. Oh let us ever refresh upon our spirits the serious and important transactions of that day, wherein we gave up ourselves to Christ, in the sacred service of his church. Let us often review the vows of these remarkable seasons of our life, and renew and confirm them before the Lord.

*Ninthly,* We charge you, and we charge ourselves, by the decaying interest of religion, and the withering state of Christianity at this day, that we do not increase this general and lamentable decay, this growing and dreadful apostasy, by our slothful and careless management of the trust that is committed to us. It is a divine interest indeed, but declining; it is a heavenly cause, but among us it is sinking and dying. O let us stir up our hearts, and all that is within us, and strive mightily in prayer and in preaching to revive the work of God, and beg earnestly that God, by a fresh and abundant effusion of his own Spirit, would *revive his own work* among us! *Revive thy own work, O Lord, in the midst of these years* of sin and degeneracy, nor let us labor in vain. *Where is thy zeal, O Lord, and thy strength, the sounding of thy bowels and thy mercies? Are they restrained?* O let us rouse our souls with all holy fervor to fulfil our ministry, for it will be a dreadful reproach upon us, and a burthen too heavy for us to bear, if we let the cause of Christ and godliness die under our hands for want of a lively zeal, and pious fervor and faithfulness in our ministrations.

*Tenthly,* We entreat, we exhort and charge you, and we charge ourselves, by the solemn and awful circumstances of a dying bed, and the thoughts of conscience in that important hour, when we shall enter into the world of spirits, that we take heed to the ministry which we have received: Surely that hour is hastening upon us, when our heads will lie upon a dying pillow. When a few more mornings and evenings have visited our windows, the shadows of a long night will begin to spread themselves over us: In that gloomy hour, conscience will review the behavior of the days that are past, will take account of the conduct of our whole lives, and will particularly examine our labors and cares in our sacred office. Oh may we ever dread the thoughts of making bitter work for repentance in that hour, and of treasuring up terrors for a death bed by a careless and useless ministry!

*Eleventhly,* We exhort, and charge you, and we charge ourselves, *by our gathering together* before the throne of our Lord Jesus Christ, and the solemn account we must there give of the ministry with which he hath entrusted us, that we prepare by our present zeal and labor to render that most awful scene peaceful to our souls,

and the issue of it joyful and happy. Let us look forward to that illustrious and tremendous appearance, when our *Lord shall come with ten thousand of his holy angels* to enquire into the conduct of men, and particularly of the ministers of his kingdom here on earth. Let us remember that we shall be examined in the light of the flames of that day. What we have done with his gospel which he gave us to preach? What we have done with his promises of rich salvation, which he sent us to offer in his name? What is become of the souls committed to our care? O that we may *give up our account with joy and not with grief*, to the Judge of the living and the dead, in that glorious, that dreadful and decisive hour!

*Twelfthly,* We charge and warn you, my dear brother, and we warn and charge ourselves, by all the terrors written in this divine book, and by all the indignation and vengeance of God, which we are sent to display before a sinful world; by all the torments and agonies of hell, which we are commissioned to denounce against impenitent sinners, in order to persuade men to turn to God, and receive and obey the gospel, that we take heed to our ministry that we fulfil it. This vengeance and these terrors will fall upon our souls, and that with intolerable weight, with double and immortal anguish, if we have trifled with these terrible solemnities, and made no use of these awful scenes to awaken men to lay hold of the offered grace of the gospel. *Knowing therefore the terrors of the Lord, let us persuade men, for we must all stand before the judgment seat of Christ, to receive according to our work;* 2 Cor. v. 10, 11.

In the last place, We entreat, we exhort and charge you, by all the joys of paradise, and the blessings of an eternal heaven, which are our hope and support under all our labors, and which in the name of Christ we offer to sinful perishing men, and invite them to partake thereof: Can we speak of such joys and glories with a sleepy heart and indolent language? Can we invite sinners who are running headlong into hell to return and partake of these felicities, and not be excited to the warmest forms of address, and the most lively and engaging methods of persuasion? What scenes of brightness and delight can animate the lips and language of an orator, if the glories and the joys of the Christian heaven and our immortal hopes cannot do it? We charge and entreat you therefore, and we charge ourselves, by the shining recompences which are promised to faithful ministers, that we keep this glory ever in view, and awaken our dying zeal in our sacred work. *There is a crown of righteousness laid up for those who have fought the good fight, who have finished their course, who have kept the faith;* 2

Tim. iv. 7. There is a *glory which is to be revealed, a crown of glory which fadeth not away*, prepared for every under-shepherd, who shall feed the flock of God under his care, and be found faithful in his work; *when the great Shepherd shall appear*, he himself will bestow it upon them. O let us look up continually to this immortal crown? Let us shake off our sluggishness, and rouse all our active powers at the prospect of this felicity. Let us labor and strive with all our might, that we may become possessors of this bright reward.

Before we conclude this exhortation, let us try to enforce it still with more power, by considering in whose presence are these solemnities transacted, and these charges given. We exhort and charge you then, in the presence of this church, who hath called you to minister to them in holy things, and who give up their souls this day to your care, to your instructions, to your conduct in the ministrations of the gospel. We charge and exhort you that you *take the oversight of them* with all humility and diligence, and sacred delight, that you make the life of their souls your perpetual care, that none of them may be lost through your default.

We exhort and charge you in the presence of this whole assembly, who are met together to behold and hear *our faith and order in the gospel*. They are witnesses of the solemn obligations you have this day laid yourself under, and will be called as witnesses against you in the day of Christ, if you take no care to perform your sacred vows. We exhort and charge you, in the presence of the holy and elect angels, who are continually waiting in their ministry on the saints in the church, and viewing with delight the ministration of the gospel of Christ, their Lord and ours, as it is managed by the hand of men. They see, they hear, and they will bear record against you; a dreadful record of broken vows and faithless promises, if you are found careless and unfaithful.

Forgive me, dear brother, forgive the solemn language of these exhortations; we hope, we believe, we are persuaded your heart is right with God, and you will be found faithful in that day, and that men and angels will be witnesses of your zeal and your labors in the sacred work. But we also feel so much coldness in our own spirits, that we have need to address you and ourselves in most solemn and awful language.

We charge you then finally, in the presence of God, the great God, the all-knowing and almighty, the universal Governor and Judge, and our Lord Jesus Christ, to whom he hath committed all judgment, *who hath eyes as a flame of fire* to see through our hearts and souls; we charge you, and we charge ourselves, under

the all-seeing eye of the great God, and of his Son Jesus our Lord, that with holy care and diligence both we and you fulfil the work of our ministry with which Christ hath entrusted us, that we may approve ourselves to him in zeal, and faithfulness, and love ; in zeal for his honor and his gospel, in faithfulness to our sacred commission, and in love and pity to the souls of men. If sinners will continue obstinate and impenitent, after all our pious cares, labors and prayers, their blood will never lie at our door ; *our work is left with the Lord, and our judgment and reward with our God* ; Isaiah xlix. 4. But if it be possible, we should with utmost earnestness and compassion seize the souls of sinners who are on the very borders of hell, we should *pluck them like brands out of the fire*, and save them from burning ; *Jude* verse 23.

O may the Spirit of the blessed God favor us with his divine aids, that we may bring home many wanderers to the fold of Christ, the great Shepherd ; that we may rescue many souls from death, who may be *our joy, our crown, our glory in the day of the Lord Jesus!* May this be your happiness, my dear brother, may this be mine ! May this be the happiness of every one of us who minister in holy things, through the abounding grace of Christ and the influences of his Spirit : And may it be the happiness of all who in different places attend our constant holy ministrations, and particularly of all that hear us this day, to stand and appear with us before the judgment-seat of Christ with mutual delight and joy : And may each of us who preach and hear, receive our proper portion of the everlasting recompence and glory which shall be assigned to those who are faithful, by Jesus, our Saviour and our Judge *to whom be dominion and praise for ever and ever.* Amen.



S E L E C T   S E R M O N S.



## SERMON I.

### THE END OF TIME.

"And the angel, which I saw stand upon the sea, and upon the earth, lifted up his hand to heaven, and sware by him that liveth for ever and ever, that there should be time no longer."—REV. x. 5, 6.

THIS is the oath, and the solemn sentence of a mighty angel, who came down from heaven, and, by the description of him in the first verse, he seems to be the *angel of God's presence, in whom is the name of God*, even our Lord Jesus Christ himself, who pronounced, and sware, that *time should be no longer*; for all seasons and times are now put into his hand, together with the book of his Father's decrees; *Rev. v. 7, 9.* What special age or period of time, in this world, the prophecy refers to, may not be so easy to determine; but this is certain, that it may be happily applied to the period of every man's life; for whosoever the term of our continuance in this world is finished, our time, in the present circumstances and scenes that attend it, shall be no more. We shall be swept off the stage of this visible state into an unseen and eternal world: Eternity comes upon us at once, and all that we enjoy, all that we do, and all that we suffer in *time, shall be no longer.*

Let us stand still here, and consider, in the first place, what awful and important thoughts are contained in this sentence, what solemn ideas should arise to the view of mortal creatures, when it shall be pronounced concerning each of them, that time shall be no more.

I. "The time of the recovery of our nature from its sinful and wretched state shall be no longer." We come into this world fallen creatures, children of iniquity, and heirs of death; we have lost the image of God, who made us, and which our nature enjoyed in our first parents; and, instead of it, we are changed into the image of the devil, in the lusts of the mind, in pride and malice, in self-sufficiency and enmity to God; and we have put on also the image of the brute, in sinful appetites and sensualities, and in the lusts of the flesh; nor can we ever be made truly happy, till the image of the blessed God be restored upon us; till we are

made holy, as he is holy ; till we have a divine change passed upon us, whereby we are created anew, and reformed in heart and practice. And this life is the only time given us for this important change. If this life be finished before the image of God be restored to us, this image will never be restored ; but we shall bear the likeness of devils for ever ; and perhaps the image of the brute too, at the resurrection of the body, and be farther off from God, and all that is holy, than ever we were here upon earth.

Of what infinite importance is it then, to be frequently awaking ourselves, at special seasons and periods of life, to enquire, whether this image of God is begun to be renewed, whether we have this glorious change wrought in us, whether our desires and delights are fixed upon holy and heavenly things, instead of those sensual and earthly objects, which draw away all our souls from God and heaven. Let it appear to us as a matter of utmost moment to seek after this change ; let us pursue it with unwearied labors, and strivings with our own hearts, and perpetual importunities at the throne of grace, lest the voice of him who swears that *there shall be time no longer*, should seize us in some unexpected moment, and lest he swear in his wrath concerning us, *Let him that is unholy be unholy still, and let him that is filthy be filthy still* ; Rev. xxii. 11.

II. When this sentence is pronounced concerning us, "the season and the means of restoring us to the favor and love of God shall be no longer." We are born children of wrath, as well as the sons and daughters of iniquity ; Eph. ii. 3. We have lost the original favor of our Maker and are banished from his love, and the superior blessings of his goodness ; and yet, blessed be the Lord, that we are not at present forever banished beyond all hope : This time of life is given us to seek the recovery of the love of God, by returning to him according to the gospel of his Son : Now is pardon and peace, now is grace and salvation preached unto men, to sinful wretched men, who are at enmity with God, and the objects of his high displeasure ; now the voice of mercy calls to us, *This is the accepted time, this is the day of salvation* ; 2 Cor. vi. 2. *Today if ye will hear his voice, let not your hearts be hardened to refuse it* ; Heb. iii. 15. Now the fountain of the blood of Christ is set open to wash our souls from the guilt of sin ; now all the springs of his mercy are broken up in the ministrations of the gospel ; now *God is in Christ, reconciling sinners to himself* ; 2 Cor. v. 19, and *he has sent us his ministers to intreat you in Christ's stead, be ye reconciled to God* ; and we beseech you in his name, *continue not one day or one hour longer in your enmity and rebel-*

*lion, but be ye reconciled to God your Creator, and accept of his offered forgiveness and grace,* verse 20.

The moment is hastening upon us, when this mighty angel, who manages the affairs of the kingdom of providence, shall swear concerning every unbelieving and impenitent sinner, that the “time of offered mercy shall be no longer, the time of pardon and grace and reconciliation shall be no more :” The sound of this mercy reaches not to the regions of the dead ; those who die before they are reconciled, they die under the load of all their sins, and must perish for ever, without the least hope or glimpse of reconciling or forgiving grace.

III. At the term of this mortal life, “the time of prayer and repentance and service for God or man in this world shall be no longer.” Eccles. ix. 10. *There is no work nor device, nor knowledge, nor wisdom, in the grave whither thou goest, whither we are all hastening.* Let every sinful creature therefore ask himself, “Have I never yet begun to pray ? Never begun to call upon the mercy of the God that made me ? Never begun to repent of all my crimes and follies ? Nor begun in good earnest to do service for God, or to honor him among men ?” Dreadful thought indeed ! When, it may be, the next hour we may be put out of all capacity and opportunity to do it for ever ! As soon as ever an impenitent sinner has the veil of death drawn over him, all his opportunities of this kind are for ever cut off : He that has never repented, never prayed, never honored his God, shall never be able to pray or repent, or do any thing for God or his honor through all the ages of his future immortality : Nor is there any promise made to repenting or returning sinners in the other world, whither we are hastening. *As the tree falls, when it is cut down, so it lies, and it must for ever lie ; pointing to the north or the south, to hell or heaven ; Eccles. ix. 3.*

And, indeed, there is no true prayer, no sincere repentance can be exercised after this life ; for the soul that has wasted away all its time given for repentance and prayer, is at the moment of death left under everlasting hardness of heart ; and whatsoever enmity against God and godliness, was found in the heart in this world, is increased in the world to come, when all manner of softening means and mercies are ever at an end. This leads me to the next thought.

IV. “How wretched soever our state is at death, the day of hope is ended, and it returns no more.” Be our circumstances never so bad, yet we are not completely wretched while the time of hope remains. We are all by nature miserable by reason of sin, but it

is only despair can perfect our misery. Therefore fallen angels are sealed up under misery, because there is no door of hope opened for them. But in this life there is hope for the worst of sinful men : There is the word of grace and hope calling them in the gospel ; there is the voice of divine mercy sounding in the sanctuary, and *blessed are they that hear the joyful sound* ; Psalm lxxxix. 15. But if we turn the deaf ear to the voice of God and his Son, and to all the tender and compassionate entreaties of a dying Saviour, hope is hastening to its period ; for this very angel will shortly swear, that this joyful sound shall be heard no longer.

He comes now to the door of our hearts, he sues there for admittance, “open unto me and receive me as your Saviour and your Lord, give me and my gospel free admission, and I will come in and bestow upon you the riches of my grace and all my salvation : Open your hearts to me with the holy desires and humble submission of penitence, and receive the blessings of righteousness and pardon and eternal life.” He now invites you to return to God, with an acknowledgment and renunciation of every sin, and he offers to take you by the hand, and introduce you into his Father’s presence with comfort : This is a day of hope for the vilest and most hateful criminals ; but if you continue to refuse, he will shortly swear in his wrath, you shall never enter into his kingdom, you shall never take of the provisions of his grace, you shall never be partakers of the blessings purchased with his blood. *Heb. iii. 11-18. I swear in my wrath, saith the Lord, they shall not enter into my rest.*

Oh the dreadful state of sinful creatures, who continue in such obstinacy, who waste away the means of grace and the seasons of hope, week after week and month after month, till the day of grace and hope is for ever at an end with them ? Hopeless creatures ! Under the power and plague of sin, under the wrath and curse of God, under the eternal displeasure of Jesus, who was once the minister of his Father’s love, and they must abide under all this wretchedness through a long eternity, and in the land of everlasting despair. But I forbear that theme at present, and proceed.

V. At the moment of our death, “the time of our preparation for the hour of judgment, and for the insurance of heaven and happiness, shall be no longer.” Miserable creatures that are summoned to die thus unprepared ! This life is the only time to prepare for dying, to get ready to stand before the Judge of the whole earth, and to secure our title to the heavenly blessedness. Let my heart enquire, “Have I ever seriously begun to prepare for a dying hour, and to appear before the Judge of all ? Have I ever con-

cerned myself in good earnest, to secure an interest in the heavenly inheritance, when this earthly tabernacle shall be dissolved? Have I ever made interest for the favor of God, and a share of the inheritance of the saints by Jesus the Mediator, while he afforded life and time?"

Death is daily and hourly hastening upon us: Death is the king of terrors, and will fulfil all his name to every soul that is unprepared. It is a piece of wisdom then for every one of us, since we must die, to search and feel whether death has lost its sting or no: Whether it be taken away by the blood of Christ? Is this blood sprinkled on my conscience, by the humble exercise of faith on a dying Saviour? Are the terrors of death removed, and am I prepared to meet it by the sanctifying influences of the blessed Spirit? Have I such an interest in the covenant of grace as takes away the sting of death, as turns the curse into a blessing, and changes the dark scenes of death into the commencement of a new and everlasting life? This is that preparation for dying for which our time of life was given us, and happy are those who are taught of God to make this use of it.

Judgment is making haste towards us: months and days of divine patience are flying swift away, and the last great day is just at hand: Then *we must give an account of all that has been done in the body, whether it has been good or evil;* 2 Cor. v. 10. And what a dismal and distressing surprise will it be, to have the Judge come upon us in a blaze of glory and terror, while we have no good account to give at his demand? And yet this is the very end and design of all our time, which is lengthened out to us on this side the grave, and of all the advantages that we have enjoyed in this life, that we may be ready to render up our account with joy to the Judge of all the earth.

Heaven is not ours by birth and inheritance, as lands and houses on earth descend to us from our earthly parents. We, as well as they, are by nature unfit for heaven, and children of wrath; but we may be born again, we may be born of God, and become heirs of the heavenly inheritance through Jesus Christ: We may be renewed in the temper and spirit of heaven; and this life is the only season that is given us for this important change: Shall we let our days and years pass away, one after another in long succession, and continue the children of wrath still? Are we contented to go on this year as the last, without a title to heaven, without a divine temper, and without any preparation for the business, or the blessedness of that happy world?

VI. When this life comes to an end, "the time of all our earthly

comforts and amusements shall be no more." We shall have none of these sensible things around us to employ or entertain our eyes or our ears, to gratify our appetites, to soothe our passions, or to support our spirits in distress. All the infinite variety of cares, labors, and joys, which surround us here, shall be no more; life with all the busy scenes, and the pleasing satisfactions of it dissolve and perish together: Have a care then that you do not make any of them your chief hope, for they are but the things of time, they are all short and dying enjoyments.

Under the various calamities of this life we find a variety of sensible reliefs, and our thoughts and souls are called away from their sorrows, by present business, or diverted by present pleasure; but all these avocations and amusements will forsake us at once, when we drop this mortal tabernacle; we must enter alone into the world of spirits, and live without them there.

Whatsoever agonies or terrors, or huge distresses we may meet with in that unknown region, we shall have none of these sensible enjoyments to soften and allay them, no drop of sweetness to mix with that bitter cup, no scenes of gaiety and merriment to relieve the gloom of that utter darkness, or to sooth the anguish of that eternal heart-ache. O take heed, my friends, that your souls do not live too much on any of the satisfactions of this life, that your affections be not set upon them in too high a degree, that you make them not your idols and your chief good, lest you be left helpless and miserable under everlasting disappointment, for they cannot follow you into the world of souls; they are the things of time, and they have no place in eternity. Read what caution the apostle Paul gives us, in our converse with the dearest comforts of life; *1 Cor. vii. 29. The time is short; and let those who have the largest affluence of temporal blessings, who have the nearest and kindest relatives, and the most endeared friendships, be mortified to them, and be in some sense, as though they had them not, for ye cannot possess them long.* St. Peter joins in the same sort of advice; *1 Peter iv. 7. The end of all things is at hand, therefore be ye sober, be ye moderate in every enjoyment on earth, and prepare to part with them all, when the angel pronounces, that time shall be no longer:* His sentence puts an effectual period to every joy in this life, and to every hope that is not eternal.

Thus we have taken a brief survey, what are the solemn and awful thoughts, relating to such mortal creatures in general, which are contained in this voice or sentence of the angel, that time shall be no longer. In the

Second place, let us proceed further and enquire a little, "what

are those terrors which will attend sinners, impenitent sinners, at the end of time?"

I. "A dreadful account must be given of all this lost and wasted time." When the Judge shall ascend his throne in the air, and all the sons and daughters of Adam are brought before him, the grand enquiry will be, what have you done with all the time of life in yonder world? "You spent thirty or forty years there, or perhaps seventy or eighty, and I gave you this time with a thousand opportunities and means of grace and salvation; what have you done with them all? How many Sabbaths did I afford you? How many sermons have ye heard? How many seasons did I give you for prayer and retirement, and converse with God and your own souls? Did you improve time well? Did you pray? Did you converse with your souls and with God? Or did you suffer time to slide away in a thousand impertinences, and neglect the one thing necessary?"

II. "A fruitless and bitter mourning for the waste and abuse of time," will be another consequence of your folly. Whatsoever satisfaction you may take now, in passing time away merrily and without thinking, it must not pass away so for ever. If the approaches of death do not awaken you, yet judgment will do it. Your consciences will be worried with reflections on your foolish conduct.

Oh! could we but hear the complaints of the souls in hell, what multitudes of them would be found groaning out this dismal note, "how hath my time been lost in vanity, and my soul is now lost for ever in distress:" How might I have shone among the saints in heaven, had I wisely improved the time which was given me on earth, given me on purpose to prepare for death and heaven? Then they will for ever curse themselves, and call themselves eternal fools, for hearkening to the temptations of flesh and sense, which wasted their time and deprived them of eternal treasures.

III. Another of the terrors, which will seize upon impenitent sinners at the end of time, will be endless despair of the recovery of lost time, and of those blessings, whose hope is for ever lost with it. There are blessings offered to sinful, miserable men in time, which will never be offered in eternity, nor put within their reach for ever. The gospel hath no calls, no invitations, no encouragements, no promises for the dead, who have lost and wasted their time, and are perished without hope. The region of sorrow, whither the Judge shall drive impenitent sinners, is a dark and desolate place, where light and hope can never come; but fruitless repentance, with horrors and agonies of soul, and doleful despair reign through that world, without one gleam of light, or hope, or

one moment of intermission. Then will despairing sinners gnaw their tongues, for anguish of heart, and curse themselves with long execrations, and curse their fellow-sinners, who assisted them to waste their time, and to ruin their souls.

IV. The last terror I shall mention, which will attend sinners at the end of time, is, "an eternal suffering of all the painful and dismal consequences of lost and wasted time." Not one smile from the face of God for ever, not one glimpse of love or mercy in his countenance, not one word of grace from Jesus Christ, who was once the chief messenger of the grace of God, not one favorable regard from all the holy saints and angels; but the fire and brimstone burn without end, *and the smoke of this their torment will ascend for ever and ever, before the throne of God and the Lamb;* Rev. xiv. 11.

Who knows how keen and bitter will be the agonies of an awakened conscience, and the vengeance of a provoked God, in that world of misery? How will you cry out, "Oh! what a wretch have I been, to renounce all the advices of a compassionate Father, when he would have persuaded me to improve the time of youth and health! Alas, I turned a deaf ear to his advice, and now time is lost, and my hopes of mercy for ever perished. How have I treated with ridicule, among my vain companions, the compassionate and pious councils of my aged parents, who labored for my salvation? How have I scorned the tender admonitions of a mother, and wasted that time in sinning and sensuality, which should have been spent in prayer and devotion? And God turns a deaf ear to my cries now, and is regardless of all my groanings." This sort of anguish of spirit, with loud and cutting complaints, would destroy life itself, and these inward terrors would sting their souls to death, if there could be any such thing as dying there. Such sighs, and sobs, and bitter agonies would break their hearts, and dissolve their being, if the heart could break or the being could be dissolved: But immortality is their dreadful portion: immortality of sorrows, to punish their wicked and wilful abuse of time, and that waste of the means of grace they were guilty of in their mortal state.

I proceed in the last place, to consider what reflections may be made on this discourse, or what are some of the profitable lessons to be learned from it.

Reflection I. We may learn, with great evidence, the inestimable worth and value of time, and particularly to those who are not prepared for eternity. Every hour you live is an hour longer given you to prepare for dying, and to save a soul. If you were but ap-

prized of the worth of your own souls, you would better know the worth of days and hours, and of every passing moment, for they are given to secure your immortal interest, and save a soul from everlasting misery. And you would be zealous and importunate in the prayer of Moses, the man of God, upon a meditation of the shortness of life; *Psalm xc. 12. So teach us to number our days, as to apply our hearts to wisdom;* that is, so teach us to consider, how few and uncertain our days are, that we may be truly wise in preparing for the end of them.

It is a matter of vast importance, to be ever ready for the end of time, ready to hear this awful sentence, confirmed with the oath of the glorious angel, that *time shall be no longer.* The terrors, or the comforts of a dying bed depend upon it: The solemn and decisive voice of judgment depends upon it: The joys and sorrows of a long eternity depend upon it: Go now, careless sinner, and, in the view of such sins as these, go and trifle away time, as you have done before; time, that invaluable treasure! Go and venture the loss of your souls, and the hopes of heaven, and your eternal happiness, in wasting away the remnant hours or moments of life: But remember the awful voice of the angel is hastening towards you, and the sound is just breaking in upon you, that *time shall be no longer.*

Reflection II. "A due sense of time, hastening to its period, will furnish us with perpetual new occasions of holy meditation."

Do I observe the declining day, and the setting sun, sinking into darkness? So declines the day of life, the hours of labor, and the season of grace: O may I finish my appointed work with honor ere the light is fled! May I improve the shining hours of grace ere the shadows of the evening overtake me, and my time of working is no more!

Do I see the moon gliding along through midnight, and fulfilling her stages in the dusky sky? This planet also is measuring out my life, and bringing the number of my months to their end. May I be prepared to take leave of the sun and moon, and bid adieu to those visible heavens, and all the twinkling glories of them! These are all but the measures of my time, and hasten me on towards eternity.

Am I walking in a garden, and stand still to observe the slow motion of the shadow upon a dial there? It passes over the hour lines with an imperceptible progress, yet it will touch the last line of day-light shortly: So my hours and my moments move onward with a silent pace; but they will arrive with certainty at the last limit, how heedless soever I am of their motion, and how

thoughtless soever I may be of the improvement of time, or of the end of it.

Does a new year commence, and the first morning of it dawn upon me? Let me remember, that the last year was finished, and gone over my head, in order to make way for the entrance of the present: I have one year the less to travel through this world, and to fulfil the various services of a traveling state: May my diligence in duty be doubled, since the number of my appointed years is diminished!

Do I find a new birth-day, in my survey of the calendar, the day wherein I entered upon the stage of mortality, and was born into this world of sins, frailties, and sorrows, in order to my probation for a better state? Blessed Lord, how much have I spent already of this mortal life, this season of my probation, and how little am I prepared for that happier world! How unready for my dying moment! I am hastening hourly to the end of the life of man, which began at my nativity: Am I yet born of God? Have I begun the life of a saint? Am I prepared for that awful day, which shall determine the number of my months on earth? Am I fit to be born into the world of spirits through the straight gate of death! Am I renewed in all the powers of my nature, and made meet to enter into that unseen world, where there shall be no more of these revolutions of days and years, but one eternal day fills up all the space with divine pleasure, or one eternal night with long and deplorable distress and darkness?

When I see a friend expiring, or the corpse of my neighbor conveyed to the grave: Alas! their months and minutes are all determined, and the seasons of their trial are finished for ever; they are gone to their eternal home, and the estate of their souls is fixed unchangeably: The angel that has sworn, their "*time shall be no longer,*" has concluded their hopes, or has finished their fears, and, according to the rules of righteous judgment, has decided their misery or happiness for a long immortality. Take this warning, O my soul, and think of thy own removal!

Are we standing in the church-yard, paying the last honors to the relics of our friends? What a number of hillocks of death appear all around us! What are the tomb-stones but memorials of the inhabitants of that town, to inform us of the period of all their lives, and to point out the day, when it was said to each of them, your "*time shall be no longer,*" O may I readily learn this important lesson, that my turn is hastening too! Such a little hillock shall shortly arise for me, on some unknown spot of ground, it shall cover this flesh and these bones of mine in darkness, and shall

hide them from the light of the sun, and from the sight of man, till the heavens be no more.

Perhaps some kind surviving friend may engrave my name, with the number of my days, upon a plain, funeral stone, without ornament, and below envy: There shall my tomb stand, among the rest, as a fresh monument of the frailty of nature, and the end of time. It is possible some friendly foot may, now and then, visit the place of my repose, and some tender eye may bedew the cold memorial with a tear: One or another of my old acquaintance may, possibly, attend there, to learn the silent lecture of mortality from my grave-stone, which my lips are now preaching aloud to the world: And if love and sorrow should reach so far, perhaps, while his soul is melting in his eyelids, and his voice scarce finds an utterance, he will point with his finger, and show his companion the month, and the day of my decease. Oh that solemn, that awful day, which shall finish my appointed time on earth, and put a full period to all the designs of my heart, and all the labors of my tongue and pen!

Think, O my soul! that while friends or strangers are engaged on that spot, and reading the date of thy departure hence, thou wilt be fixed under a decisive and unchangeable sentence, rejoicing in the rewards of time well improved, or suffering the long sorrows which shall attend the abuse of it, in an unknown world of happiness or misery.

Reflection III. We may learn, from this discourse, "the stupid folly and madness of those who are terribly afraid of the end of time, whensoever they think of it, and yet they know not what to do with their time, as it runs off daily and hourly." They find their souls unready for death, and yet they live from year to year, without any further preparation for dying: They waste away their hours of leisure in mere trifling, they lose their seasons of grace, their means and opportunities of salvation in a thoughtless and shameful manner, as though they had no business to employ them in; they live as though they had nothing to do with all their time but to eat and drink, and be easy and merry. From the rising to the setting sun, you find them still in pursuit of impertinences; they waste God's sacred time, as well as their own, either in a lazy, indolent, and careless humor, or in following after vanity, sin, and madness, while the end of time is hastening upon them.

What multitudes are there of the race of Adam, both in higher and in lower ranks, who are ever complaining they want leisure; and when they have a release from business, for one day or one

hour, they hardly know what to do with that idle day, nor how to lay out one of the hours of it for any valuable purpose! Those in higher station, and richer circumstances, have most of their time at their own command and disposal; but, by their actual disposal of it, you plainly see they know not what it is good for, nor what use to make of it; they are quite at a loss how to get rid of this tedious thing called time, which lies daily as a burden on their hands. Indeed, if their head ache, or their face grow pale, and a physician feel their pulse, or look wishfully on their countenance, and especially if he should shake his head, or tell them his fears, that they will not hold out long, what surprise of soul, what agonies and terrors seize them on a sudden, for fear of the end of time! For they are conscious how unfit they are for eternity: Yet when the pain vanishes, and they feel health again, they are as much at a loss as ever what to do with the remnant of life.

O the painful and unhappy ignorance of the sons and daughters of men, that are sent hither on a trial for eternity, and yet know not how to pass away time! They know not how to wear out life, and get soon enough to the end of the day: They doze their hours away, or saunter from place to place without any design or meaning: They enquire of every one they meet what they shall do to kill time, as the French phrase is, because they cannot spend it fast enough: They are perpetually calling in the assistance of others, to laugh, or sport, or trifle with them, and to help them off with this dead weight of time, while, at the same moment, if you do but mention the end of time, they are dreadfully afraid of coming near it. What folly and distraction is this? What sottish inconsistency is found in the heart and practice of sinful men; *Eccles. ix. 3. "The heart of the sons of men is full of evil; madness is in their heart while they live, and after that, they go down to the dead."*

Oh that these loiterers would once consider that time loiters not! days and hours, months and years loiter not; each of them flies away with swiftest wing, as fast as succession admits of, and bears them onward to the goal of eternity. If they delay and linger among toys and shadows, time knows no delay; and they will, one day, learn by bitter experience, what substantial, important, and eternal blessings they have lost by their criminal and shameful waste of time. The apostle Peter assures them, *2 Peter ii. 3.* though they slumber and sleep in a lethargy of sin, so that you cannot awaken them, yet "*their judgment lingereth not, and their damnation slumbereth not.*" The awful moment is hastening upon them, which shall teach them terribly the true value of time. Then

they would give all the golden pleasures, and the riches, and the grandeur of this world, to purchase one short day more, or one hour of time, wherein they might repent and return to God, and get within the reach of hope and salvation : But time, and salvation, and hope, are all vanished and fled, and gone out of their reach for ever.

Reflection IV. Learn, from such meditations as these, “the rich mercy of God, and *the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ in giving us so long a warning, before he swears that time shall be no more.*” Every stroke of sickness is a warning-piece, that life is coming to its period : Every death among our friends and acquaintance is another tender and painful admonition, that our death also is at hand : The end of every week and every dawning Sabbath is another warning ; every sermon we hear of the shortness of time and the uncertainty of life is a fresh intimation, that the great angel will shortly pronounce a period upon all our time. How inexcusable shall we be, if we turn the deaf ear to all these warnings ? St. Peter advises us to “*count the long-suffering of the Lord for salvation,*” 2 Peter iii. 15. and to secure our eternal safety, and our escape from hell during the season of his lengthened grace.

Alas ! How long has Jesus, and his mercy, and his gospel waited on you, before you began to think of the things of your everlasting peace ? And if you are now solemnly awakened, yet how long has he waited on you with fresh admonitions and with special providences, with mercies and judgments, with promises and invitations of grace, with threatenings and words of terror, and with the whispers and advices of his own Spirit, since you began to see your danger ? And, after all, have you yet sincerely repented of sin ? Have you yet received the offered grace ? Have you given up yourselves to the Lord, and laid hold of his salvation ? *This is the accepted time, this is the day of salvation ; 2 Cor. vi. 2. To-day if you will hear his voice, harden not your hearts ; Heb. iii. 7-11.* It is never said through all the Bible, that to-morrow is the day of grace, or to-morrow is the time of acceptance. It is the present hour only that is offered. Every day and every hour is a mercy of unknown importance to sinful men : It is a mercy, O sinners, that you awaked not this morning in hell, and that you were not fixed without remedy beyond the reach of hope and mercy.

Reflection V. Learn from this discourse what “a very useful practice it would be, to set ourselves often beforehand as at the end of time ;” to imagine ourselves just under the sound of the voice of this mighty angel, or at the tribunal of Christ, and to call our souls to a solemn account in what manner we have passed away all our leisure time hitherto ; I mean, all that time which

hath not been laid out in the necessities of the natural life, for its support and its needful refreshment, or in the due and proper employments of the civil life; both these are allowed and required by the God of nature, and the God of providence, who governs the world; but what hast thou done, O man! O woman! what hast thou done with all the hours of leisure which might have been laid out on far better employments, and to far nobler purposes? Give me leave to enter into particulars a little, for generals do but seldom convince the mind, or awaken the conscience, or affect the heart.

1. Have you not slumbered or squandered away too much time without any useful purpose or design at all? How many are there that when they have morning hours on their hands, can pass them off on their beds, and lose and forget time in a little more sleep and a little more slumber; a few impertinences, with breakfast and dressing, wear out the morning without God. And how many afternoon and evening hours are worn away in such sauntering idleness as I have described, that when the night comes, they cannot review one half hour's useful work, from the dawn of the morning to the hour of rest. Time is gone and vanished, and as they knew not what to do with it while it was present, so now it is past they know not what they have done with it: They keep no account of it, and are never prepared to come to a reckoning: But will the great Judge of all take this for an answer to such a solemn enquiry?

2. Have you never laid out much more time than was needful in recreations and pleasures of sense? Recreations are not unlawful, so far as they are necessary, and proper to relieve the fatigue of the spirits, when they are tired with business or labor, and to prepare for new labors and new businesses: But have we not followed sports without measure and without due limitation? Hath not some of that very time been spent in them which should have been laid out in preparing for death and eternity, and in seeking things of far higher importance?

3. Have you not wasted too much time in your frequent clubs, and what you call good company, and in places of public resort? Hath not the tavern, or the coffee-house, or the ale-house seen and known you from hour to hour for a whole evening, and that sometimes before the trade or labors of the day should have been ended? And when your Bible, and your closet, or the devotion of your family, have sometimes called upon your conscience, have you not turned a deaf ear to them all?

4. Have not useless and impertinent visits been made to no good purpose, or been prolonged beyond all necessity or improve-

ment? When your conversation runs low, even to the dregs, and both you and your friends have been at a loss what to say next, and knew not how to fill up the time, yet the visit must go on, and time must be wasted. Sometimes the wind and the weather, and twenty insignificancies, or, what is much worse, scandal of persons or families, have come in to your relief, that there might not be too long a silence; But not one word of God or goodness could find room to enter in, and relieve the dull hour. Is none of this time ever to be accounted for? And will it sound well in the ears of the great Judge, "We ran to these sorry topics, these slanderous and backbiting stories, because we could not tell what to talk of, and we knew not how to spend our time?"

5. Have you not been guilty of frequent, and even perpetual delays or neglects of your proper necessary business in the civil life, or in the solemn duties of religion, by busying yourselves in some other needless thing, under this pretence, "It is time enough yet?"

Have you learned that important and eternal rule of prudence, "never delay till to-morrow what may be done to-day; never put off till the next hour what may be done in this?" Have you not often experienced your own disappointment and folly by these delays? And yet have you ever so repented, as to learn to mend them? Solomon tells us, Eccles. iii. 1. *There is a time for every purpose, and every work, under the sun*; a proper and agreeable time for every lawful work of nature and life; and it is the business and care of a wise man to do proper work in proper time; but when we have let slip the proper season, how often have we been utterly disappointed? Have we not sustained great inconveniences? And sometimes it hath so happened, that we could never do that work or business at all, because another proper season for it hath never offered: Time hath been no more. Felix put off his discourse with Paul about the *faith of Christ and righteousness, and judgment to come, to a more convenient time*, which probably never came, *Acts xxiv. 25*. And the word of God teaches us, that, if we neglect our salvation in the present day of grace, the angel, in my text, is ready to swear that *time shall be no longer*.

Here permit me to put in a short word to those who have lost much time already.

O my friends! begin now to do what in you lies to regain it, by double diligence, in the matters of your salvation, lest the voice of the archangel should finish your time of trial, and call you to judgment before you are prepared.

What time lies before you for this double improvement God only knows: The remnant of the measure of your days is with him, and every evening the number is diminished: Let not the rising sun upbraid you with continued negligence. Remember your former abuses of hours, and months, and years, in folly and sin, or at best, in vanity and trifling: Let these thoughts of your past conduct lie with such an effectual weight on your hearts, as to keep you ever vigorous in present duty. Since you have been so lazy and loitering in your Christian race in time past, take larger steps daily, and stretch all the powers of your souls to hasten towards the crown and the prize. Hearken to the voice of God in his word, with stronger attention and zeal to profit: Pray to a long-suffering God with double fervency; cry aloud, and give him no rest, till your sinful soul is changed into penitence, and renewed to holiness, till you have some good evidences of your sincere love to God, and unfeigned faith in his Son Jesus. Never be satisfied till you are come to a well-grounded hope, through grace, that God is your friend, your reconciled Father, that, when days and months are no more, you may enter into the region of everlasting light and peace.

But I proceed to the last general remark. "Learn the unspeakable happiness of those who have improved time well, and who wait for the end of time with Christian hope." They are not afraid, or, at least, they need not be afraid, of the sentence nor the oath of this *mighty angel, when he lifts up his hand to heaven, and swears with a loud voice, there shall be time no more.*

O blessed creatures! Who have so happily improved the time of life and day of grace, as to obtain the restoration of the image of God, in some degree, on their souls, and to recover the favor of God through the gospel of Christ, for which end time was bestowed upon them: They have reviewed their follies with shame in the land of hope; they have mourned and repented of sin, ere the season of repentance was past, and are become new creatures, and their lips and their lives declare the divine change. They have made preparation for death, for which purpose life and time were given. Happy souls, indeed, who have so valued time as not to let it run off in trifles, but have obtained treasures more valuable than that time which is gone, even the riches of the covenant of grace, and the hopes of an eternal inheritance in glory!

Happy such souls, indeed, when time is no more with them! Their happiness begins when the duration of their mortal life is finished. Let us survey this their happiness in a few particulars.

4.<sup>th</sup> The time of their darknesses and difficulties is no longer: The good p<sup>t</sup>. painful ignorance and error is come to an end; You shall

wander no more in mistake and folly ; you shall behold all things in the light of God, and see him face to face, who is the original beauty, and the eternal truth. You shall see him without veils and shadows, without the reflecting glass of his word and ordinances, which at best gives us but a faint glimpse of him, either in his nature or wisdom, his power or goodness. You shall see him in himself, and in his Son Jesus, the brightest and fairest image of the Father, and *shall know him, as you are known*; 1 Cor. xiii. 10, 12.

There is no more time for temptation and danger : When once you are got beyond the limits of this visible world, and all the enticing objects of flesh and sense, there shall be no more hazard of your salvation, no more doubting and distressing fears about your interest in your Father's love, or in the salvation of his beloved Son.

There is no more time nor place for sin to inhabit in you : The lease of its habitation in your mortal body must end, when the body itself falls into the dust : You shall feel no more of its powerful and defiling operations, either in heart or life for ever.

The time of conflict with your spiritual adversaries is no longer. There is no more warfare betwixt the flesh and spirit, no more combat with the world and the devil, who, by a thousand ways, have attempted to deceive you, and to bear you off from your heavenly hope. *Your warfare is accomplished, your victory is complete, you are made overcomers through him that has loved you. Death is the last enemy to be overcome ; the sting of it is already taken away, and you have now finished the conquest, and are assured of the crown* ; 1 Cor. xv. 56, 57.

The time of your *distance and absence from God is no more*. The time of coldness and indifference, and the fearful danger of backslidings, is no more : You shall be made as *pillars in the temple of your God, and shall go no more out* : He shall love you like a God, and kindle the flames of your love to so intense a degree, as is only known to angels, and to the spirits of the just made perfect.

There is no more time for you to be vexed with the *society of sinful creatures* : Your spirit within you shall be no more ruffled or disquieted with the teasing conversation of the wicked, nor shall you be interrupted in your holy and heavenly exercises by any of the enemies of God and his grace.

The time of your *painful labors and sufferings is no more*. Rev. xiv. 13. *Blessed are the dead that die in the Lord, for they rest from all their labors* that carry toil or fatigue with them. *There shall be no more complaints nor groans, no sorrow or crying* ; the

springs of grief are for ever dried up, *neither shall there be any more pain* in the flesh or the spirit. *God shall wipe away all tears from your eyes*, and *death* shall be no more; *Rev. xxi. 4.*

It is finished, said our blessed Lord on the cross: It is finished, may every one of his followers say at the hour of death, and at the end of time: My sins and follies, my distresses and my sufferings, are finished for ever, and the mighty angel swears to it, that the time of these evils is no longer; they are vanished, and shall never return. O happy souls, who have been so wise to count the short and uncertain number of your days on earth, as to make an early provision for a removal to heaven! Blessed are you above all the powers of thought and language. Days, and months, and years, and all these short and painful periods of time, shall be swallowed up in a long and blissful eternity; the stream of time which has run between the banks of this mortal life, and bore you along amidst many dangerous rocks of temptation, fear, and sorrow, shall launch you out into the ocean of pleasures which have no period: those felicities must be everlasting, for duration has no limits there; time with all its measures, *shall be no more*. Amen.

## SERMON II.

### NO PAIN AMONG THE BLESSED.

"Neither shall there be any more pain."—REV. xxi. 4.

THERE have been some divines in ancient times, as well as in our present age, who suppose this prophecy relates to some glorious and happy event here on earth, wherein the saints and faithful followers of Christ shall be delivered from the bondage and miseries to which they have been exposed in all former ages, and shall enjoy the blessings which these words promise. Among these writers, some have placed this happy state before the resurrection of the body; others make it belong to that *first resurrection* which is spoken of in *Rev. xx. 6*. But let this prophecy have a particular aspect upon what earthly period soever, yet all must grant it is certainly true concerning the heavenly state; from these felicities, taken in a literal sense, these figurative expressions are derived, to foretel the happiness of any period of the church in this world; and in this sense, as part of our happiness in heaven, I shall understand the words here, and propose them as the foundation of my present discourse.

Among the many things that make this life uncomfortable, and render mankind unhappy here below, this is one that has a large influence, namely, that in this mortal state we are all liable to pain, from which we shall be perfectly delivered in the life to come. The Greek word which is here translated pain, signifies also toil and fatigue and excessive labor of the body, as well as anguish and vexation of the spirit: But since in the two other places of the New Testament where it is used, the word more properly signifies the pain of the body, I presume to understand it chiefly in this sense also in my text.

I need not spend time in explaining what pain is, to persons who dwell in flesh and blood: There is not one of you in this assembly but is better acquainted with the nature of it by the sense of feeling, than it is possible for the wisest philosopher to inform you by all his learned language. Yet that I may proceed regularly, I would just give you this short description of it. "Pain is an uneasy perception of the soul, occasioned by some indisposition

of the body to which it is united ;” whether this arise from some disorder or malady in the flesh itself, or from some injury received from without by wounds, bruises, or any thing of the like kind. Now this sort of uneasy sensations is not to be found or feared in heaven.

In order to make our present meditations on this part of the blessedness of heaven useful and joyful to us while we are here on earth, let us enquire :

I. What are the evils or grand inconveniences that generally flow from the pains we suffer here ; and as we go we shall survey the satisfactions which arise by our freedom from them all in heaven.

II. What just and convincing proofs may be given that there are no such uneasy sensations to be felt in heaven, or to be feared after this life.

III. What are the chief reasons or designs of the blessed God in sending pain on his creatures in this world ; and at the same time I shall shew that pain is banished from the heavenly state, because God has no such designs remaining to be accomplished in that world.

IV. What lessons we may learn from the painful discipline which we feel while we are here, in order to shew there is no need of such discipline to teach us those lessons in heaven. Let us address ourselves to make these four enquiries in their order.

SECTION I.—First. “What are the evils which flow from pain, and usually attend it in this life ; and all along as we go we shall take a short view of the heavenly state, where we shall be released from all these evils and inconveniences.”

1. “Pain has a natural tendency to make the mind sorrowful as well as the body uneasy.” Our souls are so nearly united to flesh and blood, that it is not possible for the mind to possess perfect happiness and ease, while the body is exposed to so many occasions of pain. It is granted, that natural courage and strength of heart may prevail in some persons to bear up their spirits under long and intense pains of the flesh ; yet they really take away so much of the ease and pleasure of life, while any of us lie under the acute sensations of them. Pain will make us confess that we are flesh and blood, and force us sometimes to cry out and groan. Even a stoic, in spite of all the pride of his philosophy, will sometimes be forced, by a sigh or a groan, to confess himself a man. What are the greatest parts of the groans and outeries, that are heard all round this our globe of earth, but the effect of pain, either felt or feared ?

But in heaven, where there is no pain, there shall be no sighing or groaning, *nor any more crying*, as my text expresses. There shall be nothing to make the flesh or the spirit uneasy, and to break the eternal thread of peace and pleasure that runs through the whole duration of the saints: Not one painful moment to interrupt the everlasting felicity of that state. When we have done with earth and mortality, we have done also with sickness and anguish of nature, and with all sorrow and vexation for ever. There are no groans in the heavenly world to break in upon the harmony of the harps and the songs of the blessed; no sighs, no outcries, no anguish there to disturb the music and the joy of the inhabitants. And though the soul shall be united to the body new-raised from the dead, to dwell for ever in union, yet that new-raised body shall have neither any springs of pain in it, nor be capable of giving anguish or uneasiness to the indwelling spirit for ever.

2. Another evil which attends on pain is this, “it so indisposes our nature, as often to unfit us for the business and duties of the present state.” With how much coldness and indifference do we go about our daily work, and perform it too with many interruptions, when nature is burdened with continual pain, and the vital springs of action are overborne with perpetual uneasiness? What a listlessness do we find to many of the duties of religion at such a season, unless it be to run more frequently to the throne of God, and pour out our groanings and our complaints there? Groanings and cries are the language of nature, and the children of God address themselves in this language to their heavenly Father: Blessed be the name of our gracious God, who hears every secret sigh, who is acquainted with the sense of every groan, while we mourn before him, and make our complaints to him, that we cannot worship him, nor work for him as we would do, because of the anguish and maladies of nature.

And what an indisposition and backwardness do we feel in ourselves to fulfil many of the duties towards our fellow-creatures, while we ourselves are under present smart and anguish? Pain will so sensibly affect self, as to draw off all our thoughts thither, and centre them there, that we cannot so much employ our cares and our active powers for the benefit of our neighbors: It abates our concern for our friends, and while it awakens the spirit within us into keen sensations, it takes away the activity of the man that feels it from almost all the services of human life. When human nature bears so much, it can act but little.

But what a blessed state will that be, when we shall never feel this

indisposition to duties, either human or divine, through any uneasiness of the body? When we shall never more be subject to any of these impediments, but for ever cast off all those clogs and burdens which fetter the active powers of the soul. Then we shall be joyfully employed in such unknown and glorious services to God our Father, and to the blessed Jesus, as require much superior capacities to what we here possess, and shall find no weakness, no weariness, no pain throughout all the years of our immortality; *Rev. vii. 15.* None of the blessed above are at rest or idle, either day or night, but *they serve him in the temple*, and never cease. And chap. iv. 8, no faintness, no languors are known there. *The inhabitants of that land shall not say, I am sick:* Everlasting vigor, cheerfulness, and ease shall render every blessed soul for ever zealous and active in obedience, as the angels are in heaven.

3. "Pain unfits us for the enjoyments of life, as well as for the labors and duties of it." It takes away all the pleasing satisfactions which might attend our circumstances, and renders the objects of them insipid and unrelishing. What pleasure can a rich man take in all the affluence of earthly blessings around him, while some painful distemper holds him upon the rack, and distresses him with the torture? How little delight can he find in meats or in drinks which are prepared for luxury, when sharp pain calls all his attention to the diseased part? What joy can he find in magnificent buildings, in gay and shining furniture, in elegant gardens, or in all the glittering treasures of the Indies, when the gout torments his hands and his feet, or the rheumatism afflicts his limbs with intense anguish? If pain attacks any part of the body, and rises to a high degree, the luxuries of life grow tasteless, and life itself is embittered to us: Or when pains less acute are prolonged through weeks and months, and perhaps stick in our flesh all the night as well as in the day, how vain and feeble are all the efforts of the bright and gay things around us, to raise the soul into cheerfulness: Therefore, Solomon calls old age *the years wherein there is no pleasure*; *Eccles. xii. 1,* because so many aches and ailments in that season pursue us in a continual succession; so many infirmities and painful hours attend us usually in that stage of life, even in the best situation that mortality can boast of, as cuts off and destroys all our pleasures.

But oh what a wondrous, what a joyful change shall that be, when the soul is commanded to forsake this flesh and blood, when it rises as on the wings of angels to the heavenly world, and leaves every pain behind it, together with the body in the arms of death? And what a more illustrious and delightful change shall we meet

in the great rising day, when our bodies shall start up out of the dust with vigorous immortality, and without any spring or seat of pain? All the unknown enjoyments with which heaven is furnished, shall be taken in by the enlarged powers of the soul with intense pleasure, and not a moment's pain shall ever interrupt them.

4. Another inconvenience and evil which belongs to pain is, that "it makes time and life itself appear tedious and tiresome, and adds a new burden to all other grievances." Many evidences of this truth are scattered throughout all nature, and on all sides of this globe. There is not one age of mankind but can furnish us with millions of instances. In what melancholy language does Job discover his sensations of the tiresome nature of pain? *I am made to possess months of vanity, and wearisome nights are appointed to me: When I lie down I say, When shall I rise and the night be gone? And I am full of tossing to and fro unto the dawning of the day;* Job vii. 3, 4. When pain takes hold of our flesh, it seems to stretch the measures of time to a tedious length: We cry out as Moses expresses it, *Deut. xxviii. 67. In the morning we say, Would to God it were evening; and at the return of the evening we say again, Would to God it were morning.*

Long are those hours indeed, whether of daylight or darkness, wherein there is no relief or intermission of acute pain. How tiresome a thing is it to count the clock at midnight in long successions, and to wait every hour for the distant approach of morning, while our eyes are unable to close themselves in slumber, and our anguish admits not the common refuge of sleep. There are multitudes among the race of mortals, who have known these truths by sore experience. Blessed be God that we do not always feel them! But when we turn our thoughts to the heavenly world, where there is no pain, there we shall find no wearisome hours, no tedious days, though eternity, with all its unmeasureable lengths of duration, lies before us. What a dismal thought is eternal pain! The very mention of it makes nature shudder and stand aghast; but futurity, with all its endless years, in a land of peace and pleasure, gives the soul the most delightful prospect, for there is no shadow of uneasiness in that state to render our abode there tiresome, or to think the ages of it long.

5. Another evil that belongs to pain is, that "it has an unhappy tendency to ruffle the passions, and to render us fretful and peevish within ourselves, as well as towards those who are round about us." Even the kindest and the tenderest hand that ministers to our relief, can hardly secure itself from the peevish quarrels of a man in extreme pain. Not that we are to suppose that this peev-

ish humor, this fretfulness of spirit, are thereby made innocent, and perfectly excused : No, by no means ; but it must be acknowledged still, that continuance in pain is too ready to work up the spirit into frequent disquietude and eagerness : We are tempted to fret at every thing, we quarrel with every thing, we grow impatient under every delay, angry with our best friends, sharp and sudden in our resentments, with wrathful speeches breaking out of our lips.

This peevish humor in a day of pain is so common a fault, that I fear it is too much excused and indulged. Let me rather say with myself, " My God is now putting me to the trial what sort of Christian I am, and how much I have learned of self-government, and through his grace I will subdue my uneasy passions, though I cannot relieve my pain." Oh, it is a noble point of honor gained in a sick chamber, or on a bed of anguish, to lie pressed with extreme pain, and yet maintain a serenity and calmness of soul ; to be all meekness, and gentleness, and patience, among our friends or attendants, under the sharp twinges of it ; to utter no rude or angry language, and to take every thing *kindly that they say or do, and become like a weaned child* ; Psalm cxxxii. 2. But such a character is not found in every house. A holy soul, through the severity of pain, may sometimes in such an hour be too much ruffled by violent and sudden fits of impatience. This proceeded to such a degree even in that good man Job, under his various calamities and the sore boils upon his flesh, that made him *curse the day wherein he was born*, and cry out in the anguish of his spirit, *my soul chooseth strangling and death, rather than life* ; Job iii. 1-10. and vii. 15. and there have been several instances of those who, having not the fear of God before their eyes, with hasty violence and murderous hands have put an end to their own lives, through their wild and sinful impatience of constant pain.

But these trials are for ever finished when this life expires : Then all our pains are ended for ever, if we are found among the children of God. There is not, nor can be any temptation in heaven to fretfulness or disquietude of mind : All the peevish passions are dropped into the grave, together with the body of flesh ; and those evil humors, which were the sources of smart and anguish here on earth, have no place in the new-raised body : Those irregular juices of animal nature, which tormented the nerves and excited pain in the flesh, and which, at the same time, provoked choler and irritated the spirit, are never found in the heavenly mansions. There is nothing but peace and pleasure, joy and love, goodness and benevolence, ease and satisfaction, diffused through

all the regions on high : There are no inward springs of uneasiness to ruffle the mind, none of those fretful ferments which were wont to kindle in the mortal body, and explode themselves with fire and thunder upon every supposed offence, or even sometimes without provocation. O happy state and blessed mansions of the saints, when this *body of sin shall be destroyed*, and all the restless atoms that disquieted the flesh and provoked the spirit to impatience, shall be buried in the dust of death, and never, never rise again !

6. "Pain carries a temptation with it sometimes to repine and murmur at the providence of God." Not fellow-creatures alone, but even our sovereign Creator, comes within the reach of the peevish humors, which are alarmed and roused by sharp or continual pain. Jonah the prophet, when he felt the sultry heat of the sun smite fiercely upon him, and the gourd which gave him a friendly shadow was withered away, he told God himself in a passion, that *he did well to be angry, even unto death*; Jonah iv. 9. And even the man of Uz, the pattern of patience, was sometimes transported with the smart and maladies that were upon him, so that he complained against God, as well as complained to him, and used some very unbecoming expressions toward his Maker. When we are under the smarting rebukes of providence, we are ready to compare ourselves with others who are in peace, and then the envious and the murmuring humor breaks out into rebellious language, "*Why am I thus afflicted more than others ? Why hast thou set me as a mark for thy arrows ? Why dost thou not let loose thy hand, and cut me off from the earth ?*"

But in heaven there is a glorious reverse of all such unhappy scenes: There is no pain nor any temptation to murmur at the dealings of the Almighty : There is nothing that can incline us to think hardly of God : The days of chastisement are for ever ended, and painful discipline shall be used no more. We shall live for ever in the embraces of the love of God, and he shall be the object of our everlasting praise. Perfect felicity, without the interruption of one uneasy thought, for ever forbids the inhabitants of that world to repine at their situation under the eternal smiles of that blessed Being that made them.

7. To add no more, "Pain and anguish of the flesh have sometimes prevailed so far, as to distract the mind, as well as destroy the body. It has overpowered all the reasoning faculties of man ; it has destroyed natural life, and brought it down to the grave : The senses have been confounded, and the understanding overwhelmed with severe and racking pain, especially where there hath been an impatient temper to contest with them. Extreme smart

of the flesh distresses feeble nature, and turns the whole frame of it upside down in wild confusion: It has actually worn out this animal frame, and stopped all the springs of vital motion. The gout and the stone have brought death upon the patient in this manner; and a dreadful manner of dying it is, to have breath and life, and nature, quite oppressed and destroyed with intense and painful sensations. But when we survey the mansions of the heavenly world, we shall find none of these evils there: No danger of any such events as these; *for there is no pain, no sorrow, no crying, no death* nor destruction *there*. The mind shall be for ever clear and serene in the ease and happiness of the separate state: And when the body shall be raised again, that glorified body, as was intimated a little before, shall have none of the seeds of distemper in it, no fermentations that can rack the nerves, or create anguish; no fever, or gout, or stone, was ever known in that country; no headache or heart-ache have ascended thither.

That body also shall be capable of no outward wounds or bruises, for it is raised only for happiness, and leaves all the causes of pain behind it. It is a body made for immortality and pleasure; there the sickly Christian is delivered from all the maladies of the flesh, and the twinges of acute pain, which made him groan here on earth night and day. There the martyrs of the religion of Jesus, and all the holy confessors, are free from their cruel tormentors, those surly executioners of heathen fury, or antichristian wrath: They are for ever released from racks, and wheels, and fires, and every engine of torture or smart. Immortal ease, and unfading health and cheerfulness, run through their external state, and all the powers of the man are composed for the most regular exercises of devotion and divine joy. Thus I have endeavored briefly to set the different states of heaven and earth before you under this distinguishing character, that "all the tempting, the distressing, and mischievous attendants and consequences of pain," to which we are exposed in our mortal life, are for ever banished from the heavenly world.

SECTION II. The second general enquiry was this, "What just and convincing arguments or proofs can be given, that there are no pains or uneasy sensations to be felt by the saints in a future state, nor to be feared after this life?" My answers to this question shall be very few, because I think the thing must be sufficiently evident to those who believe the New Testament, and have liberty to read it.

Argument I. "God has assured us so in his word, that there is no pain for holy souls to endure in the world to come." My text may

be esteemed a sufficient proof of it ; for whatsoever particular event or period of the church on earth this prophecy may refer to, yet the description is borrowed from the blessedness of heaven ; and if there shall be any such state on earth, much more will it be so in the heavenly world whereof that period on earth is but a shadow and emblem. We are expressly told, *Rev. xiv. 13.* in order to encourage the persecuted saints and martyrs, *Blessed are the dead who die in the Lord, from henceforth, for they rest from their labors or pains, and their works follow them ;* that is, in a way of gracious recompense.

It is granted indeed by the papists themselves, that in heaven there is no pain ; yet they suppose there are many and grievous pains for the soul to undergo in a place called purgatory, after the death of the body, before it arrives at heaven. But give me leave to ask, does not St. Paul express himself with confidence concerning himself and his fellow-Christians—"that they shall be *present with the Lord* when they are *absent from the body ?*" *2 Cor. v. 8.* Surely, the state wherein Christ our Lord dwells after all his sufferings and agonies, is a state of everlasting ease without suffering ; and shall not his followers dwell with him? Do we not read in the parable of our Saviour, *Luke xvi. 22.* that "Lazarus was no sooner dead, but his soul was carried by angels into the bosom of Abraham, or paradise ? Every holy soul, wherein the work of grace is begun, and sin hath received its mortal wound, is perfectly sanctified when it is released from this body ; and it puts off the body of sin and the body of flesh together, *for nothing that defileth must enter into paradise,* or the heavenly state ; *Rev. xxi. 27.*

The word of God has appointed but two states, *viz.* heaven and hell, for the reception of all mankind when they depart from this world ; And how vain a thing must it be for men to invent a third state, and make a purgatory of it ? This is a building erected by the church of Rome between heaven and hell, and prepared by their wild imagination for souls of imperfect virtue, to be tormented there, with pains equal to those of hell, but of shorter duration. This state of fiery purgation, and extreme anguish, is devised by that mother of lies, partly under a pretence of completing the penances and satisfaction for the sins of men committed in this life, and partly also to purify and refine their souls from all the remaining dregs of sin, and to fill up their virtues to perfection, that they may be fit for the immediate presence of God. But does not the Scripture sufficiently inform us, that the atonement or satisfaction of Christ for sin is full and complete in itself, and needs none of our additions in this world or another ? Does not the apostle John

tell us, 1 John i. 7. *The blood of Jesus Christ cleanseth us from all sin?* Nor shall the saints after this life sin any more, to require any new atonement; nor do they carry the seeds of sin to heaven with them but drop them together with the flesh, and all the sources of pain together: Now since neither Christ nor his apostles give us any intimation of such a place as purgatory, for the refinement or purification of souls after this life, we have no ground to hearken to such a fable.

II. "God has not provided any medium to convey pain to holy souls after they have dropped this body of flesh." They are pardoned, they are sanctified, they are accepted of God for ever; and since they are in no danger of sinning afresh by the influences of corrupt flesh and blood, therefore they are in no fear of suffering any thing thereby. And if, as some divines have supposed, there should be any pure ethereal bodies or vehicles provided for holy separate spirits, when departed from this grosser tabernacle of flesh and blood, yet it cannot be supposed that the God of all grace would mix up any seeds of pain with that ethereal matter, which is to be the occasional habitation of sanctified spirits in that state, nor that he would make any avenues or doors of entrance for pain into these refined vehicles, when the state of their sinning and their trial is for ever finished.

Nor will the body at the final resurrection of the saints, be made for a medium of any painful sensations. All the pains of nature are ended, when the first union between flesh and spirit is dissolved. When this body lies down to sleep in the dust, it shall never awake again with any of the principles of sin or pain in it: *Though it be sown in weakness, it is raised in power: though it be sown in dishonor, it is raised in glory;* 1 Cor. xx. 43. and we shall be made like the Son of God, without sorrow and without sin for ever.

III. "There are no moral causes or reasons why there should be any thing of pain provided for the heavenly state." And if there be no moral reasons for it, surely God will not provide pain for his creatures without reason! But this thought leads me to the next general head of my discourse.

SECTION III. The third general enquiry which I proposed to make was this, "What may be the chief moral reasons, motives, or designs of the blessed God, in sending pain on his creatures here below; and at the same time I shall show, that these designs and purposes of God are finished, and they have no place in heaven."

1. Then "Pain is sometimes sent into our natures, to awaken slothful and drowsy Christians out of their spiritual slumbers, or to rouse stupid sinners from a state of spiritual death." Intense and

sharp pain of the flesh has oftentimes been the appointed and effectual means of providence to attain these desirable ends.

Pain is like a rod in the hand of God, wherewith he smites sinners *that are dead in their trespasses*, and his Spirit joins with it to awaken them into spiritual life. This rod is sometimes so smarting and severe, that it will make a senseless and ungodly wretch look upwards to the hand that smites, and take notice of the rebuke of heaven, though all the thundering and lightning of the word, and all the terrors of hell denounced there, could not awaken them. Acute pain is also a common instrument in our heavenly Father's hand, to recover backsliding saints from their secure and drowsy frames of spirit. David often found it so, and speaks it plainly in *Psalms xxxviii.* and *xxxix.* and in *Psalm cxix.* 67, he confesses, *before I was afflicted, I went astray*; but when he had felt the scourge, he learned to obey, and to keep the word of his God.

But there is no need of this discipline in heaven; no need of this smarting scourge, to make dead sinners feel their Maker's hand, in order to rouse them into life, for there are no such inhabitants in that world: Nor is there any need of such divine and paternal discipline of God in those holy mansions, where there is no drowsy Christian to be awakened, no wandering spirit that wants to be reduced to duty: And where the designs of such smarting strokes have no place, pain itself must be for ever banished; for *God does not willingly afflict, nor take delight in grieving the children of men*, without substantial reasons for it; *Lam. iii. 33.*

2. Another use of bodily pain and anguish in this world is, "to punish men for their faults and follies, and to make them know *what an evil and bitter thing it is to sin against God*, and thereby to guard them against new temptations; *Jer. ii. 19.* *Thy own wickedness shall correct thee, and thy backslidings shall reprove thee*; that is by means of the smarting chastisements they bring upon men. When God makes the sinner *taste of the fruit of his own ways*, he makes others also observe how hateful a thing every sin is in the sight of God, which he thinks fit so terribly to punish.

This is one general reason why special diseases, maladies, and plagues, are spread over a whole nation, *viz.* to punish the sins of the inhabitants, when they have provoked God by public and spreading iniquities. War and famine, with all their terrible train of anguish and agony, and the dying pains which they diffuse over a kingdom, are rods of punishment in the hand of God, the governor of the world, to declare from heaven and earth his indignation against an ungodly and an unrighteous age.

This indeed is one design of the pains and torments of hell,

where God inflicts pain without intermission: And this is sometimes the purpose of God in his painful providences here on earth: Shall I rise yet higher and say, this was one great design in the eye of God, *when it pleased the Father to bruise his best beloved Son, and put him under the impressions of extreme pain; Isaiah liii. 10, viz.* to discover to the world the abominable evil that was in sin? While Jesus stood in the stead of sinners, then *his soul was exceeding sorrowful even to death, and he sweat great drops of blood;* Luke xxii. 44, under the pressure of his agonies, to let the world see what the sin of man had deserved: And sometimes God smites his own children in this world with smarting strokes of correction, when they have indulged any iniquity, to show the world that God hates sin in his own people wheresoever he finds it, and to bring his children back again to the paths of righteousness.

But "in the heavenly state there are no faults to punish, no follies to chastise." Jesus, our surety in the days of his flesh, has suffered those sorrows which made atonement for sin, and that anguish of his holy soul, and the blood of his cross, have satisfied the demands of God; so that with honor he can pardon ten thousand penitent criminals, and provide an inheritance of ease and blessedness for them for ever. When once we are dismissed from this body, the spirit is thoroughly sanctified, and there is no fire of purgatory needful to burn out the remains of sin: Those foolish invented flames are but false fire, kindled by the priests of Rome to fright the souls of the dying, and to squeeze money out of them to purchase so many vain and idle masses to relieve the souls of the dead. Upon our actual release from this flesh and blood, neither the guilt nor the power of sin shall attend the saints in their flight to heaven: All the spirits that arrive there are *made perfect* in holiness without new scourges, and commence a state of felicity that shall never be interrupted.

3. God has appointed pain in this world, "to exercise and try the virtues and the graces of his people." As gold is thrown into the fire to prove and try how pure it is from any coarse alloy, so the children of God are sometimes left for a season in the furnace of sufferings, partly to refine them from their dross, and partly to discover their purity and their substantial weight and worth.

Sometimes "God lays smarting pain with his own hand" on the flesh of his people, on purpose to try their graces: When we endure the pain without murmuring at providence, then it is we come off conquerors. Christian submission and silence under the hand of God is one way to victory. *I was dumb,* says David, *and*

*opened not my mouth, because thou didst it ; Psalm xxxix. 9.* Our love to God, our resignation to his will, our holy fortitude and our patience, find a proper trial in such smarting seasons. Perhaps when some severe pain first seizes and surprises us, we find ourselves *like a wild bull in a net*, and all the powers of nature are thrown into tumult and disquietude, so that we have no possession of our own spirits ; but when the hand of God has continued us awhile under this divine discipline, we learn to bow down to his sovereignty, we lie at his footstool calm and composed : He brings our haughty and reluctant spirits down to his foot, and makes us lie humble in the dust, and we wait with patience the hour of his release. Rom. v. 3, 4. *Tribulation worketh patience, and patience under tribulation gives us experience of the dealings of God with his people, and makes our way to a confirmed hope in his love.* The evidence of our various graces grows brighter and stronger under a smarting rod, till we are settled in a joyful confidence, and the soul rests in God himself. Sometimes he has permitted evil angels to put the flesh to pain, for the trial of his children ; so Job was smitten *with sore boils from head to foot* by the malice of Satan, at the permission of God ; but *he knows the way that I take, says this holy man, and when he has tried me I shall come forth as gold ; for my foot has held his steps, through all these trials, neither have I gone back from the commandment of his lips ; Job xxiii. 10—12.*

At other times “he suffers wicked men to spend their own malice, and to inflict dreadful pains on his own children.” Look back to the years of ancient persecution in the land of Israel, under Jewish or heathen tyrants ; review the annals of Great Britain ; look over the seas into popish kingdoms ; take a view of the cursed courts of inquisition in Spain, Portugal, and Italy ; behold the weapons, the scourges, the racks, the machines of torture and engines of cruelty, devised by the barbarous and inhuman wit of men, to constrain the saints to renounce their faith, and dishonor their Saviour. See the slow fires where the martyrs have been roasted to death with lingering torment : These are seasons of terrible trial indeed, whereby the malice of Satan and antichrist would force the servants of God, and the followers of the Lamb, into sinful compliances with their idolatry, or desertion of their post of duty : But the Spirit of God has supported his children to bear a glorious testimony to *pure and undefiled religion* ; and they have seemed to mock the rage of their tormentors, to defy all the stings of pain, and triumph over all their vain attempts to compel them to sin against their God.

One would sometimes be ready to wonder, that a God of infinite mercy and compassion should suffer his own dear children to be tried in so terrible a manner as this; but unsearchable wisdom is with him, and he does not give an account to men of all the reasons and the rules of his conduct. This has been his method of providence with his saints at special seasons, under the Jewish and the Christian dispensations, and perhaps under all the dispensations of God to men, from the days of Cain and Abel to the present hour. Our blessed Lord has given us many warnings of it in his word by his own mouth, and by all his three apostles, Paul, Peter, and John: *They that will live godly in Christ Jesus shall suffer persecution*; 2 Tim. iii. 12. *Think it not strange therefore concerning the fiery trial*; 1 Peter iv. 12. *The devil, by his wicked agents, shall cast some of you into prison, that ye may be tried; and ye shall have tribulation ten days, but fear none of the things which thou shalt suffer: Be thou faithful unto death, and I will give thee a crown of life*; Rev. ii. 10.

But blessed be God, that this world is the only state of such trials. As soon as the state of probation is finished, the state of recompense begins. Such hard and painful exercises to try the virtues of the saints, have no place in that world which was not made for a stage of trial and conflict, but a place of glorious reward. "Heaven is the place where crowns and prizes are distributed to all those blessed ones *who have endured temptation*," and who have been found *faithful to the death*. These sharp and dreadful combats with pain have no place among conquerors, who have finished their warfare, and have begun their triumph.

4. "Pain is sent us by the hand of providence to teach us many a lesson both of truth and duty, which perhaps we should never have learned so well without it." This sharp sensation awakens our best powers to attend to those truths and duties which we took less notice of before: In the time of perfect ease we are ready to let them lie neglected or forgotten, till God our great master takes his rod in hand for our instruction.

SECTION IV.—And this leads me to the fourth general head of my discourse, and that is, to enquire what are those spiritual lessons which may be learned on earth, from the pains we have suffered, or may suffer in the flesh. I shall divide them into two sorts, *viz.* Lessons of instruction in useful truths, and lessons of duty, or practical Christianity; and there are many of each kind with which the disciples of Christ in this world may be better acquainted by the actual sensations of pain, than any other way. In this world I say, and in this only; for in heaven most of these lessons of

doctrine and practice are utterly needless to be taught, either because they have been so perfectly well known to all its inhabitants before, and their present situation makes it impossible to forget them; or they shall be let into the fuller knowledge of them in heaven in a far superior way of instruction, and without any such uneasy discipline. And this I shall evidently make appear when I have first enumerated all these general lessons both of truth and duty, and shewn how wisely the great God has appointed them to be taught here on earth, under the scourge and the wholesome discipline of pain in the flesh.

I. "The lessons of instruction here on earth, or the useful truths," are such as these:

1. Pain teaches us feelingly "what feeble creatures we are, and how entirely dependent on God our Maker for every hour and moment of ease." We are naturally wild and wanton creatures, and especially in the season of youth, our gayer powers are gadding abroad at the call of every temptation; but when God sends *his arrows into our flesh*, he arrests us on a sudden, and teaches us that we are but men, poor feeble dying creatures, soon crushed, and sinking under his hand. We are ready to exult in the vigor of youth, when animal nature in its prime of strength and glory, raises our pride, and supports us in a sort of self-sufficiency; we are so vain and foolish as to imagine nothing can hurt us: But when the pain of a little nerve seizes us, and we feel the acute twinges of it, we are made to confess that *our flesh is not iron, nor our bones brass*; that we are by no means the lords of ourselves, or sovereigns over our own nature: We cannot remove the least degree of pain, till the Lord who sent it takes off his hand and commands the smart to cease. If the torture fix itself but in a finger or a toe, or in the little nerve of a tooth, what intense agonies may it create in us, and that beyond all the relief of medicines, till the moment wherein God shall give us ease. This lesson of the frailty of human nature must be some time written upon our hearts in deep and smarting characters, by intense pain, before we have learned it well; and this gives us, for time to come, a happy guard against our pride and vanity. *Psalm xxxix. 10.* When David felt the stroke of the hand of God upon him, and corrected him with sharp rebukes for his iniquity, he makes an humble address to God and acknowledges that his "beauty, and all the boasted excellencies of flesh and blood, *consume away like a moth; surely every man is vanity!*" *Psalm xxxix. 10, 11.*

2. The next useful truth in which pain instructs us, is "the great evil that is contained in the nature of sin, because it is the

occasion of such intense pain and misery to human nature." I grant, I have hinted this before, but I would have it more powerfully impressed upon our spirits, and therefore I introduce it here again in this part of my discourse, as a spiritual lesson, which we learn under the discipline of our heavenly Father.

It is true indeed that innocent nature was made capable of pain in the first Adam, and the innocent nature of the man Jesus Christ suffered acute pain when he came in the likeness of sinful flesh: But if Adam had continued in his state of innocence, it is a great question with me, whether he or his children would have actually tasted or felt what acute pain is; I mean such pain as we now suffer, such as makes us so far unhappy, and such as we cannot immediately relieve. It may be granted that natural hunger and thirst, and weariness after labor, would have carried in them some degrees of pain or uneasiness, even in the state of innocence; but these are necessary to awaken nature to seek food and rest, and to put the man in mind to supply his natural wants; and man might have immediately relieved them himself, for the supplies of ease were at hand, and these sort of uneasinesses were abundantly compensated by the pleasures of rest and food, and perhaps they were in some measure necessary to make food and rest pleasant.

But surely if sin had never been known in our world, all the pain that arises from inward diseases of nature, or from outward violence, had been a stranger to the human race, an unknown evil among the sons of men, as it is among the holy angels, the sons of God. There had been no distempers or acute pains to meet young babes at their entrance into this world: no maladies to attend the sons and daughters of Adam through the journey of life; and they should have been translated to some higher and happier region without death and without pain.

It was the eating of the *tree of knowledge of good and evil*, that acquainted Adam and his offspring with the evil of pain. Or if pain could have attacked innocence in any form or degree, it would have been put in a way of trial to exercise and illustrate his virtues; and if he had endured the test and continued innocent, I am satisfied he should never have felt any pain which was not overbalanced with superior pleasure, or abundantly recompensed by succeeding rewards and satisfactions.

Some persons indeed have supposed it within the reach of the sovereignty of God to afflict and torment a sinless creature: Yet I think it is hardly consistent with his goodness, or his equity, to constrain an innocent being, which has no sin, to suffer pain without his own consent, and without giving that creature equal or

superior pleasure as a recompence. Both those were the case in the sufferings of our blessed Lord in his human nature, who was perfectly innocent: It was with his own consent that he gave himself up to be a sacrifice, when *it pleased the Father to bruise him and put him to grief*; Isaiah liii. 10. and God rewarded him with transcendent honors and joys after his passion, *he exalted him to his own right hand and his throne, and gave him authority over all things.*

In general therefore, we have sufficient reason to say, that as *sin brought in death* into human nature, so it was sin that brought in pain also; and wheresoever there is any pain suffered among the sons and daughters of men, I am sure we may venture to assert boldly, that the sufferer may learn the evil of sin. Even the Son of God himself, when he suffered pain in his body as well as anguish in his spirit, has told us by his apostles, that our sins were the causes of it; *he bore our sins in his own body, on the tree, and for our iniquities he was bruised*, so says Isaiah the prophet; Isaiah liii. 5. and so speaks Peter the apostle; 1 Peter ii. 24.

And sometimes the providence of God is pleased to point out to us the particular sin we are guilty of by the special punishment which he inflicts. In *Psalm cvii. 17, 18.* *Fools are said to be afflicted*, that is, *with pain and sickness, because of their transgressions of riot and intemperance; their soul abhors all manner of meat, and they draw near to the gates of death.* Sickness and pain overbalance all the pleasures of luxury in meats and drinks, and make the epicure pay dear for the elegance of his palate, and the sweet relish of his morsels or his cups. The drunkard in his debauches is preparing some smarting pain for his own punishment. And let us all be so wise as to learn this lesson by the pains we feel, that sin which introduced them into the world is an abominable thing in the sight of God, because it provokes him to use such smarting strokes of discipline in order to recover us from our folly, and to reduce us back again to the paths of righteousness.

O blessed smart! O happy pain, that helps to soften the heart of a sinner, and melts it to receive divine instruction, which before was hard as iron, and attended to no divine counsel! We are ready to wander from God, and forget him amongst the months and years of ease and pleasure; but when the soul is melted in this furnace of painful sufferings, it more easily receives some divine stamp, some lasting impression of truth, which the words of the preacher and the book of God had before inculcated without success, and repeated almost in vain. Happy is the soul that learns

this lesson thoroughly, and gains a more lasting acquaintance with the evil of sin and abhorrence of it, under the smarting stroke of the hand of God. *Blessed is the man whom thou correctest, O Lord, and teachest him the truths that are written in thy law;* Psalm xciv. 12.

3. Pain in the flesh teaches us also "how dreadfully the great God can punish sin and sinners when he pleases, in this world, or in the other." It is written in the song of Moses, the man of God ; *Psalm xc. 11. According to thy fear, so is thy wrath,* that is, the displeasure and anger of the blessed God is as terrible as we can fear it to be ; and he can inflict on us such intense pains and agonies, whose distressing smart we may learn by feeling a little of them. Unknown multiplications of racking pain, lengthened out beyond years and ages, is part of the description of hellish torments, and the other part lies in the bitter twinges of conscience, and keen remorse of soul for our past iniquities, but without all hope. Behold a man under a sharp fit of the gout or stone, which wrings the groans from his heart, and tears from his eye-lids ; this is the hand of God in the present world, where there are many mixtures of divine goodness ; but if ever we should be so wilfully unhappy as to be plunged into those regions where the almighty vengeance of God reigns, without one beam of divine light or love, this must be dreadful indeed. *It is a fearful thing to fall into the hands of the living God ;* Heb. x. 31. to be banished far off from all that is holy and happy, and to be confined to that dark dungeon, that place of torture, *where the gnawing worm of conscience never dies, and where the fire of divine anger is never quenched ;* Mark ix. 43.

We who are made up of flesh and blood, and interwoven with many nerves and muscles, and membranes, may learn a little of the terrors of the Lord, if we reflect that every nerve, muscle, and membrane of the body is capable of giving us most sharp and painful sensations. We may be wounded in every sensible part of nature ; smart and anguish may enter in at every pore, and make almost every atom of our constitution an instrument of our anguish. *Fearfully and wonderfully are we formed ;* Psalm cxxxix. 14. indeed, capable of pain all over us ; and if a God should see fit to punish sin to its full desert, and penetrate every atom of our nature with pain, what surprising and intolerable misery must that be ! And if God should raise the wicked out of their graves to dwell in such sort of bodies again, on purpose to shew his just anger against sin in their punishment, how dreadful, beyond expression, must their anguish be through the long ages of eternity ! God can

form even such bodies for immortality, and can sustain them to endure everlasting agonies.

Let us think again, that when the hand of our Creator sends pain into our flesh, we cannot avoid it, we cannot fly from it, we carry it with us wheresoever we go: *His arrows stick fast in us*, and we cannot shake them off; oftentimes it appears that we can find no relief from creatures: And if by the destruction of ourselves, that is, of these bodies, we plunge ourselves into the world of spirits at once, we shall find the same God of holiness and vengeance there, who can pierce our souls with unknown sorrows, equal if not superior to all that we felt in the flesh. *If I make my bed in the grave, Lord thou art there*; Psalm cxxxix. 6. thy hand of justice and punishment would find me out.

What a formidable thing it is to such creatures as we are, to have God our maker for our enemy! That God, who has all the tribes of pain and disease, and the innumerable host of maladies at his command! He fills the air in which we breathe with fevers and pestilences as often as he will: The gout and the stone arrest and seize us by his order, and stretch us upon a bed of pain: Rheumatisms and cholics come and go wheresoever he sends them, and execute his anger against criminals. He keeps in his hand all the various springs of pain, and every invisible rack that can torment the head or members, the bowels or the joints of man: He sets them at their dreadful work when and where he pleases. Let the sinner tremble at the name of his power and terror, who can fill both flesh and spirit with thrilling agonies; and yet he never punishes beyond what our iniquities deserve. How necessary is it for such sinful and guilty beings as we are, whose natures are capable of such constant and acute sensations of pain, to have the God of nature our friend and our reconciled God?

4. When we feel the acute pains of nature, we may learn something of the exceeding greatness of the love of Christ, even the Son of God, that glorious Spirit, who took upon him flesh and blood for our sakes, that he might be capable of pain and death though he had never sinned. He endured intense anguish to make atonement for our crimes. *Because the children whom he came to save from misery were partakers of flesh and blood, he also himself took part of the same*, that he might suffer in the flesh, and by his sufferings put away our sins; *Heb. ii. 14*. Happy was he in his Father's bosom, and the delight of his soul through many long ages before his incarnation: But he condescended to be born *in the likeness of sinful flesh*, that he might feel such smart and sorrows as our sins had exposed us to. His innocent and holy soul was incapable of

such sort of sufferings till he put on this clothing of human nature, and became a surety for sinful perishing creatures.

Let us survey his sufferings a little. He was born to sorrow, and trained up through the common uneasy circumstances, of the infant and childish state, till he grew up to man : What pains did attend him in hunger and thirst, and weariness, while he travelled on foot from city to city, through wilds and deserts, where there was no food nor rest ? *The Son of man sometimes wanted the common bread of nature, nor had he where to lay his head.* What uneasy sensations was he exposed to, when he was *buffeted*, when he was *smitten on the cheeks*, when his tender flesh was *scourged with whips*, and his temples were *crowned with thorns*, when his *hands and his feet* were barbarously torn with rude nails, and fastened to the cross, where the whole weight of his body hung on those wounds ? And what man or angel can tell the inward anguish, when *his soul was exceeding sorrowful even unto death*, and the conflicts and agonies of his spirit forced out the drops of bloody sweat through every pore. It was by the extreme torture of his nature that he was supposed to expire on the cross ; these were the pangs of his atonement and agonies that expiated the sins of men.

“ O blessed Jesus : what manner of sufferings were these ! And what manner of love was it that willingly gave up thy sacred nature to sustain them ! And was the design of them, but to deliver us from the wrath of God in hell, to save our flesh and spirit from eternal anguish and distress there ! Why was he made such a curse for us, but that he might redeem us from the curse of the law ; Gal. iii. 13. and the just punishment of our own iniquities ? ”

Let us carry our thoughts of his love and our benefit by it, yet one step farther ; Was it not by these sorrows, and this painful passion, that he provided for us this very heaven of happiness, where we shall be for ever freed from all pain ? Were they not all endured by him to procure a paradise of pleasure, a mansion of everlasting peace and joy for guilty creatures, who had merited everlasting pain ? Was it not by these agonies in the mortal body which he assumed, that he purchased for each of us a glorified body, strong and immortal as his own when he rose from the dead, a body which has no seeds of disease or pain in it, no springs of mortality or death ? May glory, honor and praise, with supreme pleasure, ever attend the sacred person of our Redeemer, whose sorrows and anguish of flesh and spirit were equal to our misery, and to his own compassion.

5. Another lesson which we are taught by the long and tiresome pains of nature, “ is the value and worth of the word of God,

and the sweetness of a promise, which can give the kindest relief to a painful hour, and soothe the anguish of nature." They teach us the excellency of the covenant of grace, which has sometimes strengthened the feeblest pieces of human nature to bear intense sufferings in the body, and which sanctifies them all to our advantage. Painful and tiresome maladies teach us to improve the promises to valuable purposes, and the promises take away half the smart of our pains by the sensations of divine love let into the soul. We read of philosophers and heroes in some ancient histories, who could endure pain by dint of reasoning, by a pride of their science, by an obstinacy of heart, or by natural courage; but a Christian takes the word of a promise, and lies down upon it in the midst of intense pains of nature; and the pleasure of devotion supplies him with such ease, that all the reasonings of philosophy, all the courage of nature, all the anodynes of medicine, and soothing plaisters have attempted without success. When a child of God can read his Father's love in a promise, and by searching into the qualifications of his own soul, can lay faster hold of it by a living faith, the rage of his pain is much allayed, and made half easy. A promise is a sweet couch to rest a languishing body in the midst of pains, and a soft repose for the head or heart-ache.

The stoics pretended to give ease to pain, by persuading themselves there was no evil in it; as though the mere misnaming of things would destroy their nature: But the Christian, by a sweet submission to the evil which his heavenly Father inflicts upon his flesh, reposes himself at the foot of God on the covenant of grace, and bears the wounds and the smart with much more serenity and honor. "It is my heavenly Father that scourges me, and I know he designs me no hurt, though he fills my flesh with present pain: His own presence, and the sense of his love, soften the anguish of all that I feel: He bids me not yield to fear, for *when I pass through the fire he will be with me*; and he that loved me and died for me, has suffered greater sorrows and more anguish on my account, than what he calls me to bear under the strokes of his wise and holy discipline: He has left his word with me as a universal medicine to relieve me under all my anguish, till he shall bring me to those mansions on high, where sorrows and pains are found no more."

6. Anguish and pain of nature here on earth teach us "the excellency and use of the mercy-seat in heaven, and the admirable privilege of prayer." Even the sons of mere nature are ready to think of God at such a season; and they who never prayed before, *pour out a prayer before him when his chastening is upon them*; Isaiah xxvi. 16. An hour of twinging and tormenting pain, when

creatures and medicines can give no relief, drives them to the throne of God to try whether he will relieve them or no. But much more delightful is it for a child of God that has been used to address the throne of grace, to run thither with pleasure and hope, and to spread all his anguish before the face of his heavenly Father. The blessed God has built this mercy-seat for his people to bring all their sorrows thither, and spread them before his eyes in all their smarting circumstances, and he has been often pleased to speak a word of relief.

Our Lord Jesus Christ, when he dwelt in flesh and blood, practised this part of religion with holy satisfaction and success. *Being in an agony, he prayed more earnestly, and an angel was sent to strengthen and comfort him*; Luke xxii. 43, 44. This was the relief of holy David in ancient times; *Psalm xxv. 18. Look upon my affliction and my pain, and pardon all my sins.* Psalm cxvi. 3, 4. *The sorrows of death compassed me, and the pains of hell, or the grave, took hold of me; then called I upon the name of the Lord; O Lord, I beseech thee, deliver my soul.* And when he found a gracious answer to his request, he acknowledges the grace of God therein, and charges his soul to dwell near to God; *return to thy rest, O my soul, for the Lord hath dealt bountifully with thee: I was brought low, and he helped me, he delivered my soul from death, and my eyes from tears;* verses 6-8.

But we have stronger encouragement than David was acquainted with, since it is revealed to us, that we have a High-priest, at this throne, ready to bespeak all necessary relief for us there; Heb. ii. 18. *A High-priest, who can be touched with the feeling of our infirmities,* who has sustained the same sorrows and pains in the flesh, who can pity and relieve his people under their maladies and acutest anguish; *Heb. iv. 15.* When we groan and sigh under continued pains, they are ready to make nature weary and faint: We groan unto the Lord, who knows the language of our frailty: Our High-priest carries every groan to the mercy-seat: His compassion works towards his brethren, and he will suffer them to continue no longer under this discipline, than is necessary for their own best improvement and happiness.

O how much of this sort of consolation has many a Christian learned and tasted, by a holy intercourse with heaven in such painful seasons? How much has he learned of the tender mercies of God the Father, and of the pity and sympathy of our great High-priest above? Who would be content to live in such a painful world as this is, without the pleasure and relief of prayer? Who would live without an interest at this mercy-seat, and without the supporting friendship of this Advocate at the throne?

Thus I have run over the chief lessons of instruction or doctrine, which may be derived from our sensations of pain here in this world : But there is no need of this sort of discipline in the blessed regions of heaven to teach the inhabitants such truths.

They well remember what feeble helpless creatures they were when they dwelt in flesh and blood ; but they have put off those fleshy garments of mortality, with all its weaknesses together. The spirits of the blessed know nothing of those frailties, nor shall the bodies of the saints new-raised from the dust, bring back any of their old infirmities with them. These blessed creatures know well how entirely dependent they are for all things upon God their Creator, without the need of pains and maladies to teach them, for they live every moment with God, and in a full dependence upon him : They are supported in their life and all its everlasting blessings, by his immediate presence, power, and mercy.

They have no need of pain in those fields or gardens of pleasure to teach them the evil of sin ; they well remember all the sorrows they have passed through in their mortal state, while they were traversing the wilderness of this world, and they know that sin was the cause of them all. They see the evil of sin in the glass of the divine holiness, and the hateful contrariety that is in it to the nature of God is discovered in the immediate light of all his perfections, his wisdom, his truth and his goodness. They behold the evil of sin in the marks of the sufferings of their blessed Saviour ; he appears in glory as the *Lamb that was slain*, and carries some memorials of his death about him, to let the saints know for ever what he has suffered to make atonement for their sins.

Nor have the blessed above any need to learn how dreadfully God can punish sin and sinners, while they behold his indignation going forth in a long and endless stream, to make the wicked enemies of God in hell for ever justly miserable : And in this sense it may be said, that *the smoke of their torments comes up before God and his holy angels, and his saints for ever* ; Rev. xiv. 10. Nor do these happy beings stand in need of new sensations of pain, to teach them the exceeding greatness of the love of Christ, who exposed himself to intense and smarting anguish both of flesh and spirit, to procure their salvation : For while they dwell amidst the blessedness of that state, which the Redeemer purchased with the price of his own sufferings, they can never forget his love. Nor do they want to learn in heaven the value of the word of God and his promises, by which they were supported under their pains and sorrows in this mortal state. Those promises have been fulfilled to them partly on earth, and in a more glorious and abundant man-

ner in the heavenly world. They relish the sweetness of all those words of mercy, in reviewing the means whereby divine grace sustained them in their former state of trial, and in the complete accomplishment of the best of those promises in their present situation amidst ten thousand endless blessings.

And if any of them are too cold and remiss, and infrequent in their applications to the mercy-seat by prayer, when they were here on earth, and stood in need of chastisement to make them pour out their prayers to God, yet they can never forget the value of this privilege while they themselves dwell round about the throne, and behold all their ancient sincere addresses to the mercy-seat answered and swallowed up in the full fruition of their present glories and joys. Praise is properly the language of heaven, when all their wants are supplied and their prayers on earth are finished; and whatever further desires they may have to present before God, the throne of grace is ever at hand, and God himself is ever in the midst of them to bestow every proper blessing in its season that belongs to the heavenly world. Not one of them can any more stand in need of chastisement or painful exercises of the flesh to drive them to the throne of God, while they are at home in their Father's house, and for ever near him and his all-sufficiency. It is from thence they are constantly deriving immortal supplies of blessedness as from a spring that will never fail.

SECTION V.—I proceed now to consider in the last place, what are the “practical lessons which pain may teach us while we are here on earth, in our state of probation and discipline, and shall afterward make it evident that there is no need of pain in heaven for the same purposes.”

1. The frequent returns of pain may put us in mind “to offer to God his due sacrifices of praise for the months and years of ease which we have enjoyed.” We are too ready to forget the mercy of God herein, unless we are awakened by new painful sensations; and when we experience new relief, then *our lips are opened* with thankfulness, *and our mouth shews forth his praise*: Then we cry out with devout language, *Blessed be the Lord that has delivered us!* When we have been oppressed for some time with extreme anguish, then one day, or one hour of ease fills the heart and the tongue with thankfulness; “blessed be the God of nature that has appointed medicines to restore our ease, and blessed be that goodness that has given success to them!” What a rich mercy is it under our acute torments, that there are methods of relief and healing found among the powers of nature, among the plants and the herbs, and the mineral stores which are under ground! Blessed

be the Lord, who, in the course of his providence, has given skill to physicians to compose and to apply the proper means of relief! Blessed be that hand that has planted every herb in the field or the garden, and has made the bowels of the earth to teem with medicines for the recovery of our health and ease; and blessed be his name who has rebuked our maladies, who has constrained the smarting diseases to depart by the use of balms and balsams that are happily applied.

While we enjoy the benefits of common life, in health of body and in easy circumstances, we are too often thoughtless of the hand of God, which showers down these favors of heaven upon us in a long and constant succession; but when he sees fit to touch us with his finger, and awaken some lurking malady within us, our ease vanishes, our days are restless and painful, and tiresome nights of darkness pass over us without sleep or repose. Then we repent that we have so long forgotten *the God of our mercies*; and we learn to lift up our praises to the Lord, that every night of our lives has not been restless, that every day and hour has not been a season of racking pain. Blessed be the Lord that enables us, without anguish or uneasiness, to fulfil the common business of the day; and blessed be his hand that draws the peaceful curtains of the night round about us! And even in the midst of moderate pains, we bless his name who gives us refreshing slumbers; and we grow more careful to employ and improve every moment of returning ease, as the most proper way of expressing our thankfulness to our almighty Healer.

Alas! what poor, sorry, sinful creatures are we in the present state, who want to be taught the value of our mercies by the removal of them! The man of a robust and vigorous make, and a healthy constitution, knows not the true worth of health and ease nor sets a due value upon these blessings of heaven; but we are taught to thank God feelingly, for an easy hour after long repeated twinges of pain: We bless that goodness which gives us an easy night after a day of distressing anguish. Blessed be the God of nature and grace, that has not made the gout or the stone immortal, nor subjected our sensible powers to an everlasting cholic or tooth-ache.

2. Pain in the flesh more effectually teaches us to sympathize with those who suffer. We learn a tenderness of soul experimentally by our own sufferings. We generally love self so well, that we forget our neighbors under special tribulation and distress, unless we are made to feel them too. In a particular manner, when our nature is pinched and pierced through with some smarting

malady, we learn to pity those who lie groaning under the same disease. A kindred of sorrows and sufferings works up our natures into compassion, and we find our own hearts more sensibly affected with the groans of our friends under a sharp fit of the gout or rheumatism, when we ourselves have felt the stings of the same distemper.

Our blessed Saviour himself, though he wanted not compassion and love to the children of men, since he came down from heaven on purpose to die for them, yet he is represented to us as our merciful High-priest, who had learned sympathy and compassion to our sorrows in the same way of experience as we learn it. He was encompassed about with infirmities, when he took the sinless frailties of our nature upon him, that he might learn to pity us under those frailties. *In that he himself hath suffered being tempted, he is able to succor them that are tempted: For we have not a High-priest which cannot be touched with the feeling of our infirmities, but was in all points tempted like as we are, though he was always without sin; and by the things which he suffered, he may be said, after the manner of men, to learn sympathy and pity to miserable creatures, as well as obedience to God, who is blessed forever;* Heb. ii. 18. and chapter iv. 15. and chapter v. 2-8.

3. Since our natures are subject to pain, it should teach us “watchfulness against every sin, lest we double our own distresses by the mixture of guilt with them.” How careful should we be to keep always a clear conscience, that we may be able at all times to look up with pleasure to the hand of God who smites us, and be better composed to endure the pains which he inflicts upon us for our trial and improvement in grace. Innocence and piety, and a peaceful conscience, are an admirable defence to support the spirit against the overwhelming efforts of bodily pain: But when inward reproaches of mind and a racking conscience join with acute pain in the flesh, it is double misery, aggravated wretchedness. The scourges and inward remorse of our own hearts, joined to the sorrows of nature, add torment to torment. How dreadful is it when we are forced to confess, “I have procured all this to myself by intemperance, by my rashness, by my obstinacy against the advice of friends, and rebellion against the commands of God!”

Probably it was such circumstances as these that gave the soul of David double anguish, *when his bones waxed old, through his roaring all the day long, when day and night the hand of God was heavy upon him, and his moisture was turned into the drought of summer;* when he complained unto God, *thy arrows stick fast in me, and thy hand presseth me sore: There is no soundness in my*

flesh, because of thy anger ; nor any rest in my bones, because of my sin. My iniquities are gone over my head as a heavy burden, they are too heavy for me. Deep calls unto deep at the noise of thy water-spouts, all thy waves and thy billows are gone over me. The deep of anguish in my flesh calls to the deep of sorrow in my soul, and makes a tremendous tumult within me. My wounds stink, and are corrupt, because of my foolishness : I am feeble and sore broken ; I have roared by reason of the disquietness of my heart ; nor could he find any rest or ease till he acknowledged his sin unto God, and confessed his transgressions, and till he had some comfortable hope that God had forgiven the iniquity of his sin. See this sorrowful scene exemplified in a very affecting manner in *Psalms xxxii. and xxxviii.* Happy is the man that walks closely with his God in the days of health and ease, that whenever it shall please his heavenly Father to try him with smarting pain, he may find sweet relief from a peaceful conscience, and humble appeals to God concerning his own sincerity and watchfulness.

4. Pain in the flesh may sometimes be sent by the hand of God, to teach us “to wean ourselves by degrees from this body, which we love too well ; this body, which has all the springs of pain in it.” How little should we be fond of this flesh and blood in the present feeble state wherein we are continually liable to one malady or another ; to the head-ache, or the heart-ache, to wounds or bruises, and uneasy sensations of various kinds : Nor can the soul secure itself from them, while it is so closely united to this mortal body. And yet we are too fond of our present dwelling, though it be but in a cottage of clay, feeble and ruinous, where the winds and the storms are continually ready to break in and distress us. A sorry habitation indeed for an immortal spirit, since sin has mingled so many diseases in our constitution, has made so many avenues for smart and anguish in our flesh, and we are capable of admitting pain and agonies at every pore.

Pain is appointed to be a sort of balance to the “tempting pleasures of life, and to make us feel that perfect happiness does not grow among the inhabitants of flesh and blood.” Pain takes away the pleasures of the day, and the repose of the night, and makes life bitter in all the returning seasons. The God of nature and grace is pleased, by sending sickness and pain, to loosen his own children by degrees from their fond attachment to this fleshly tabernacle, and to make us willing to depart at his call.

A long continuance of pain, or the frequent repeated twinges of it, will “teach a Christian and incline him to meet death with courage, at the appointed hour of release.” This will much abate

the fierceness of *the king of terrors*, when he appears as a sovereign physician to finish every malady of nature. Death is sanctified to the holy soul, and by the covenant of grace this curse of nature is changed into a blessing. The grave is a safe retiring place from all the attacks of disease and anguish : And there are some incurables here on earth, which can find no perfect relief but in the grave. Neither maladies nor tyrants can stretch their terrors beyond this life ; and if we can but look upon death as a conquered enemy, and its sting taken away by the death of Christ, we shall easily venture into this last combat, and obtain an everlasting victory. Blessed be God for the grave as a refuge from smarting pains ! *Thanks be to God through Christ Jesus*, who enables us to triumph over the last pain of nature, and to say, *O death ! where is thy sting ?* And, *O grave ! where is thy victory ?* 1 Cor. xv. 55.

In the fifth and last place, by the pains that we suffer in this body, “we are taught to breathe after the blessedness of the heavenly state, wherein there shall be no pain !” When the soul is dismissed from the bonds of flesh, and presented before God in the world of spirits *without spot or blemish* by Jesus, our great forerunner, it is then appointed to dwell among *the spirits of the just made perfect*, who were all released in their several seasons from the body of flesh and sin. Maladies and infirmities of every kind are buried in the grave and cease for ever : and if we survey the properties of the new-raised body in the great resurrection day, as described, 1 Cor. xv. 42–44. we shall find no room for pain there, no avenue or residence for smart or anguish. It will not be such a body of flesh and blood which can be a source of maladies, or subject to outward injuries ; but by its own principles of innate vigor and immortality, as well as by the power and mercy of God, it shall be for ever secured from those uneasy sensations which made our flesh on earth painful and burdensome, and which tended toward dissolution and death. It is such a body as our Lord Jesus wore at his ascent to heaven in a bright cloud, for ever incorruptible ; *for flesh and blood cannot inherit the kingdom of God, neither doth corruption inherit incorruption*, verses 49, 50. *As we have borne the image of the earthly Adam in the frailties and sufferings that belong to it, so shall we also bear the image of the heavenly*, even the Lord Jesus Christ, *who shall change our vile body, that it may be fashioned like unto his own glorious body, according to the working whereby he is able to subdue all things unto himself* ; Phil. iii. 21. We shall hunger no more, we shall thirst no more, nor shall the sun light on us with its parching beams, nor shall we be annoyed with fire or frost, with heat or cold, in those temperate

and happy regions. *The Lamb which is in the midst of the throne shall feed his people for ever there with the fruits of the tree of life, and with unknown entertainments suited to a glorified state. He shall lead them to living fountains of waters, and God shall wipe away all tears from their eyes ; Rev. vii. 16, 17.*

Thus have I set before you the practical lessons which pain is designed to teach us in our present state ; and we find that a body subject to maladies and pains, is a well-appointed school wherein our great Master gives us these divine instructions, and trains us up by degrees for the heavenly world. It is rough discipline indeed for the flesh, but it is wholesome for the soul : And there is many a Christian here on earth that have been made to confess, they had never learned the practice of some of these virtues, if they had not been taught by such sort of discipline. Pain which was brought into human nature by sin, is happily suited by the providence of God to such a state of probation, wherein creatures born in the midst of sins and sorrows are by degrees recovered to the love of God and holiness, and fitted for the world of peace and joy.

But when we have done with this world, and departed from the tribes of mortal men, and from all the scenes of allurement and temptation, there is no more need that such lessons should be taught us in heaven, nor any painful scourge made use of by the Father of spirits, to carry on, or to maintain the divine work of holiness and grace within us. Let us survey this matter according to the foregoing particulars.

Is it possible that while the blessed above are surrounded with endless satisfactions flowing from the throne of God and the Lamb, they should forget their benefactor and neglect his praises ? Is it possible they should dwell in immortal health and ease without interruption, under the constant vital influences of the king of glory, and yet want gratitude to the spring of all their blessings ?

Nor is there any need for the inhabitants of a world, where no pains nor sorrows are found, "to learn compassion and sympathy to those who suffer," for there are no sufferers there : But love and joy, intense and intimate love, and a harmony of joy runs through all that blessed company and unites them in a universal sympathy, if I may so express it, or blissful sensation of each other's happiness. And I might add also, could there be such a thing as sorrow and misery in those regions, this divine principle of love would work sweetly and powerfully toward such objects in all necessary compassion.

What if pain was once made a spur to our duties in this frail state of flesh and blood ? What if pain were designed as a guard

against temptation, and a means to awaken our watch against new transgressions and guilt? But in a climate where all is holiness, and all is peace, in the full enjoyment of the great God, and secured by that everlasting covenant which was sealed by the blood of the Lamb, there is no more danger of sinning. The soul is moulded into the more complete likeness of God, by living for ever under the light of his countenance, and the warmest beams of his love. What if we had need of the stings of pain and anguish in time past, to wean us by degrees from this body, and from all sensible things, and to make us willing to part with them all at the call of God? Yet when we arrive at the heavenly world, we shall have no more need of being weaned from earth, we shall never look back upon that state of pain and frailty with a wishful eye, being for ever satisfied in the affluence of present joys.

O glorious and happy state! where millions of creatures who have dwelt in bodies of sin and pain, and have been guilty of innumerable follies and offences against their Maker, yet they are all forgiven, their robes are washed and made white in the blood of Jesus, their iniquities are cancelled for ever, and there shall not be one stroke more from the hand of God to chasten them, nor one more sensation of pain to punish them. Divine and illustrious privilege indeed, and a glorious world, where complete sanctification of all the powers of nature shall for ever secure us from new sins, and where the springs and causes of pain shall for ever cease, both within us and without us! Our glorified bodies shall have no avenue for pain to enter; the gates of heaven shall admit no enemy to afflict or hurt us; God is our everlasting friend, and our souls shall be satisfied with the *rivers of pleasure which flow for ever at the right hand of God*; Psalm xvi. 11. Amen.

## SERMON III.

### NO NIGHT IN HEAVEN.

"For there shall be no night there."—REV. xxi. 25.

LENGTH of night and overspreading darkness in the winter season, carries so many inconveniences with it that it is generally esteemed a most uncomfortable part of our time. Though night and day necessarily succeed each other all the year, by the wise appointment of God in the course of nature, by means of the revolution of the heavenly bodies, or rather of this earthly globe, yet the night season is neither so delightful, nor so useful a part of life, as the duration of daylight. It is the voice of all nature as well as the word of Solomon, *Light is sweet and a pleasant thing to enjoy the sunbeams*; Eccles. xi. 7. Light gives a glory and beauty to every thing that is visible, and shews the face of nature in its most agreeable colors; but night, as it covers all the visible world with one dark and undistinguishing veil, is less pleasing to all the animal parts of the creation. Therefore as hell, and the place of punishment is called *utter darkness* in Scripture, so heaven is represented as a mansion of glory, as *the inheritance of the saints in light*; Col. i. 12. And this light is constant without interruption, and everlasting, or without end. So my text expresses it, *there shall be no night there*.

Let it be observed, that in the language of the holy writers, light is often ascribed to intellectual beings, and is used as a metaphor to imply knowledge and holiness and joy. Knowledge is the beauty and excellency of the mind, holiness is the best regulation of the will, and joy is the harmony of our best affections in the possession of what we love: And in opposition to these, ignorance, iniquity, and sorrow, are represented by the metaphor of darkness. Then we are in darkness, in a spiritual sense, when the understanding is beclouded or led into mistake, or when the will is perverted or turned away from God and holiness, or when the most uncomfortable affections prevail in the soul. I might cite particular texts of Scripture to exemplify all this. And when it is said, *there shall be no night in heaven*, it may be very well applied in the spiritual sense; there shall be no errors or mistakes among the blessed, no such ignorance as to lead them astray, or to make them uneasy;

the will shall never be turned aside from its pursuit of holiness and obedience to God ; nor shall the affections ever be ruffled with any thing that may administer grief and pain. Clear and unerring knowledge, unspotted holiness, and everlasting joy shall be the portion of all the inhabitants of the upper world. These are more common subjects of discourse.

But I choose rather at present to consider this word **NIGHT**, in its literal sense, and shall endeavor to represent part of the blessedness of the heavenly state under this special description of it. *There is no night there.*

Now in order to pursue this design, let us take a brief survey of the several evils or inconveniences which attend the night or the season of darkness here on earth, and shew how far the heavenly world is removed and free from all manner of inconvenience of this kind.

1. Though night be the season of sleep, for the relief of nature and for our refreshment after the labors of the day, yet it is a certain sign of the weakness and weariness of nature, when it wants such refreshments and such dark seasons of relief. But there is no night in heaven. “ Say, O ye inhabitants of that vital world, are ye ever weary ? Do your natures know any such weakness ? Or are your holy labors of such a kind, as to expose you to fatigue, or to tire your spirits ? ” “ The blessed above *mount up* towards God as on eagles’ wings, they run at the command of God, and are not weary, they walk on the hills of paradise, and never faint,” as the prophet Isaiah expresses a vigorous and pleasurable state, chapter xl. 31.

There are no such animal bodies in heaven, whose natural springs of action can be exhausted or weakened by the business of the day : There is no flesh and blood there to complain of weariness, and to want rest. O blessed state, where our faculties shall be so happily suited to our work, that we shall never feel ourselves weary of it, nor fatigued by it. And as there is no weariness, so there is no sleeping there. Sleep was not made for the heavenly state. Can the spirits of the just ever sleep under the full blaze of divine glory, under the incessant communications of divine love, under the perpetual influences of the grace of God the Father, and of Jesus the Saviour, and amidst the inviting confluence of every spring of blessedness.

2. Another inconvenience of night, near akin to the former, is, that business is interrupted by it, partly for want of light to perform it as well as for want of strength and spirits to pursue it. This is constantly visible in the successions of labor and repose here on

earth; and the darkness of the night is appointed to interrupt the course of labor and the business of the day, that nature may be recruited. But the business of heaven is never interrupted; there is everlasting light and everlasting strength. “Say, ye blessed spirits on high, who join in the services which are performed for God and the Lamb there; ye who unite all your powers in the worship and homage that is paid to the Father, and to the Son; ye that mingle in all the joyful conversation of that divine and holy assembly, say, is there found any useless hour there: Do your devotions, your duties and your joys, ever suffer such an entire interruption of rest and silence, as the season of darkness on earth necessarily creates amongst the inhabitants of our world!”

The living creatures\* which are represented by John the apostle in *Rev.* iv. 6–8. whether they signify saints or angels, yet they were *full of eyes* that never slumber; *they rest not day nor night*, this is spoken in the language of mortals, to signify that they are never interrupted by any change of seasons, or intervening darkness in the honors they pay to God: They are described as ever saying, *Holy, holy, holy, Lord God almighty, who was, and is, and is to come*. And the same sort of expression is used concerning the saints in heaven; *Rev.* vii. 14, 15. *They who came out of great tribulation, and have washed their robes, and made them white in the blood of the Lamb, they are before the throne of God, and serve him day and night in his temple*; that is, they constantly serve or worship him in his holy temple in heaven. Perhaps the different orders and ranks of them, in a continual succession, are ever doing some honors to God. As there is no night there, so is there no cessation of their services, of their worship, and their holy exercises, in one form or another, throughout the duration of their being.

Our pleasures here on earth are short-lived: If they are intense, nature cannot bear them long, any more than constant business and labor: And if our labors and our pleasures should happily join and mingle here on earth, which is not always the case, yet night compels us to break off the pleasing labor, and we must rest from the most delightful business. Happy is that region on high, where business and pleasure are for ever the same among all the inhabitants of it, and there is no pause or entire cessation of the one or the other. “Tell me, ye warm and lively Christians, when your hearts are sweetly and joyfully engaged in the worship of God, in holy conversation, or in pious services here on earth, how often you have

\* The word ζῷα, which is translated “beasts,” signifies only “animals,” or “living creatures,” and does not carry with it so mean and so disagreeable an idea as the word “beasts” in English.

been forced to break off these celestial entertainments by the returning night. But in the heavenly state there is everlasting active service with everlasting delight and satisfaction." In that blessed world there can be no idleness, no inactivity, no trifling intervals to pass away time, no vacant or empty spaces in eternal life. Who can be idle under the immediate eye of God? Who can trifle in the presence of Christ? Who can neglect the pleasurable work of heaven under the sweet influences of the present Deity, and under the smiles of his countenance, who approves all their work and worship.

3. As in our present world, the hours of night are inactive if we sleep, so they seem long and tedious when our eyes are wakeful, and sleep flies from us. Perhaps we hear the clock strike one hour after another, with wearisome longings for the next succeeding hour: We wish the dark season at an end, and we long for the approach of morning, we grow impatient for the dawning of the day. But in heaven, "ye spirits who have dwelt longest there, can ye remember one tiresome or tedious hour, through all the years of your residence in that country? Is there not eternal wakefulness among all the blessed? Can any of you ever indulge a slumber? Can you sleep in heaven? Can you want it or wish for it? No, for that world is all vital, and sprightly for ever." When we leave this flesh and blood, farewell to all the tedious measures of time, farewell tiresome darkness; our whole remaining duration is life and light, vital activity and vigor, attended with everlasting holiness and joy.

4. While we are here on earth the darkness of the night often exposes us to the danger of losing our way, of wandering into confusion, or falling into mischief. When the sunbeams have withdrawn their light, and midnight clouds overspread the heaven, we cannot see our path before us, we cannot pursue our proper course, nor secure ourselves from stumbling. How many travellers have been betrayed by the thick shadows of the night into mistaken ways or pathless deserts, into endless mazes among thorns and briars, into bogs and pits and precipices, into sudden destruction and death? But there are no dangers of this kind in the heavenly world: All the regions of paradise are for ever illuminated by the glory of God! The light of his countenance shines upon every step that we shall take, and brightens all our way. We shall walk in the light of God, and under the blessed beams of *the Sun of righteousness*, and we are secured for ever against wandering, and against every danger of tripping or falling in our course. *Our feet may stumble on the dark mountains here below*; Jer. xiii. 16, but there

is no stumbling-block on the hills of paradise, nor can we go astray from our God or our duty. The paths of that country are all pleasure, and everliving daylight shines upon them without end. Happy beings, who dwell or travel there!

5. In the night we are exposed here on earth to the violence and plunder of wicked men, whether we are abroad or at home. There is scarce any safety now-a-days to those who travel in the night, and even in our own habitations there is frequent fear and surprise. At that season the sons of mischief *dig through houses in the dark which they had marked for themselves in the daytime*: They lurk in corners to seize the innocent, and to rob him of his possessions. But in the heavenly world there is no dark hour; there is nothing that can encourage such mischievous designs, nor are any of the sons of violence or the malicious powers of darkness suffered to have an abode or refuge in that country. No surprise nor fear belongs to the inhabitants of those regions. Happy souls, who spend all their life in the light of the countenance of God, and are for ever secure from the plots and mischievous devices of the wicked!

While we dwell here below amongst the changing seasons of light and darkness, what daily care is taken to shut the doors of our dwellings against the men of mischief! What solicitude in a time of war to keep the gates of our towns and cities well secured against all invasion of enemies! Cantic. iii. 8. *Every man with his sword upon his thigh because of fear in the night.* But, in that blessed world there is no need of such defences; no such guardian cares to secure the inhabitants. *The gates of that city shall not be shut by day and there is no night there.* There shines perpetual daylight, and the gates are ever open to receive new-comers from our world, or for the conveyance of orders and messages to and fro from the throne, through all the dominions of God and of the Lamb. Blessed are the inhabitants of that country, where there are no dangers arising from any of the wicked powers of darkness, nor any dark minute to favor their plots of mischief.

6. "The time of night and darkness is the time of the concealment of secret sins." Shameful iniquities are then practised amongst men, because the darkness is a cover to them. *The eye of the adulterer watches for the twilight, saying, No eye shall see me;* Job xxiv. 15. *In the black and dark night* he hopes for concealment as well as the thief and the murderer, and *they that are drunken, are drunken in the night;* 1 Thess. v. 7. The hours of darkness are a temptation to these iniquities, and the shadows of the evening are a veil to cover them from the sight of men: They find a screen

behind the curtains of the night, and a refuge in thick darkness. But in the heavenly world, there is no temptation to such iniquities, no defilement can gain an entrance there, nor could it find any veil or covering. The regions of light, and peace, and holy love, are never violated with such scenes of villainy and guilt. No secret sins can be committed there, nor can they hope for any screen to defend them from the eye of God, and the Lamb, whose eyes are like a flame of fire. The light of God shines round every creature in that country, and there is not a saint or angel there, that desires a covering from the sight of God, nor would accept of a veil or screen to interpose between him and the lovely glories of divine holiness and grace. To behold God, and to live under the blessings of his eye is their everlasting and chosen joy. O that our world were more like it!

7. When the night returns upon us here on earth, the pleasures of sight vanish and are lost. Knowledge is shut out at one entrance, in a great degree, and one of our senses is withheld from the spreading beauties and glories of this lower creation, almost as though we were deprived of it, and were grown blind for a season.

It is true, the God of nature has appointed the moon and stars to relieve the darkness, at some seasons, that when the sun is withdrawn, half the world at those hours may not be in confusion : And by the inventions of men, we are furnished with lamps and candles to relieve our darkness within doors : But if we stir abroad in the black and dark night, instead of the various and delightful scenes of the creation of God, in the skies and the fields, we are presented with a universal blank of nature, and one of the great entertainments and satisfactions of this life is quite taken away from us. But in heaven, the glories of that world are for ever in view : The beauteous scenes and prospects of the hills of paradise are never hidden : We shall there continually behold a rich variety of *things which eye hath not seen on earth, which ear hath not heard, and which the heart of man hath not conceived* ; 1 Cor. ii. 9. Say, ye souls in paradise, ye inhabitants of that glorious world, is there any loss of pleasure by your absence from those works of God which are visible here on earth, while you are for ever entertained with those brighter works of God in the upper world ? While every corner of that country is enlightened by the glory of God himself, and while the Son of God, with all his beams of grace, shines for ever upon it ?

8. It is another unpleasing circumstance of the night season, that it is the coldest part of time. When the sun is sunk below the

earth and its beams are hidden from us, its kindly and vital heat, as well as its light, are removed from one side of the globe; and thus gives a sensible uneasiness in the hours of midnight to those who are not well provided with warm accommodations. And I might add also, it is too often night with us in a spiritual sense, while we dwell here on earth: Our hearts are cold as well as dark: How seldom do we feel that fervency of spirit in religious duties which God requires! How cool is our love to the greatest and the best of beings! How languid and indifferent are our affections to the Son of God, *the chiefest of ten thousand and altogether lovely!* And how much doth the devotion of our souls want its proper ardor and vivacity!

But when the soul is arrived at heaven, we shall be all warm and fervent in our divine and delightful work. As there shall be nothing painful to the senses in that blessed climate, so there shall not be one cold heart there, nor so much as one lukewarm worshipper; for we shall live under the immediate rays of God, who formed the light, and under the kindest influences of Jesus, *the sun of righteousness.* We shall be made *like his angels*, who are most active *spirits, and his ministers*, who are *flames of fire*; Psalm civ. 4. Nor shall any dulness or indifference hang upon our sanctified powers and passions: They shall be all warm and vigorous in their exercise, amidst the holy enjoyments of that country.

In the ninth and last place, as night is the season appointed for sleep, so it becomes a constant periodical emblem of death, as it returns every evening. Sleep and midnight, as I have shewn before, are no seasons of labor or activity, nor of delight in the visible things of this world: It is a dark and stupid scene wherein we behold nothing with truth, though we are sometimes deceived and deluded by dreaming visions and vanities: Night and the slumbers of it are a sort of shorter death and burial, interposed between the several daily scenes and transactions of human life. But in heaven, as there is no sleeping there is no dying, nor is there any thing there that looks like death. Sleep, the image or emblem of death, is for ever banished from that world. All is vital activity there: Every power is immortal, and every thing that dwells there is for ever alive. There can be no death, nor the image of it where the everliving God dwells, and shines with his kindest beams; His presence maintains perpetual vitality in every soul, and keeps the new creature in its youth and vigor for ever. The saints shall never have reason to mourn over their withering graces, languid virtues and dying comforts; nor shall they ever complain of drowsy faculties or inactive powers, where God and the Lamb are for ever

present in the midst of them. Shall I invite your thoughts to dwell a little upon this subject?

Shall we make a more particular inquiry, whence it comes to pass that there is no night nor darkness in the heavenly city? We are told a little before the words of my text, that *the glory of God enlightens it, and the Lamb is the light thereof.* *There is no need of the sun by day, or of the moon by night;* there is no need of any such change of seasons as day and night in the upper regions, nor any such alternate enlighteners of a dark world, as God has placed in our firmament, or in this visible sky. The inheritance of the saints in light is sufficiently irradiated by God himself, who at his first call made the light to spring up out of darkness over a wide chaos of confusion, before the sun and moon appeared; and the beams of divine light, grace, and glory, are communicated from God, the original fountain of it, by the Lamb, to all the inhabitants of the heavenly country. It was by Jesus, his Son, that God made the light at first, and by him he conveys it to all the happy worlds.

There is no doubt of this in the present heaven of saints departed from flesh, who are ascended to *the spirits of the just made perfect.* It is one of their privileges that they go to dwell not only where they see the face of God, but where they behold the glory of Christ, and converse with *Jesus, the Mediator of the new covenant;* Heb. xii. 23, 24. and are "for ever with the Lord, who redeemed them." 2 Cor. v. 8. Since his mediatorial kingdom and offices are not yet finished in the present heaven of separate souls, we may depend on this blessedness to be communicated through Christ, the Lamb of God, and all the spiritual enjoyments and felicitiss which are represented under the metaphor of light, are conveyed to them through Jesus the Mediator.

The sun, in the natural world, is a bright emblem of divinity, or the Godhead: for it is the spring of all light and heat and life to the creation. It is by the influences of the sun that herbs, plants, and animals are produced in their proper seasons, and in all their various beauties, and they are all refreshed and supported by it. Now if we should suppose this vast globe of fire, which we call the sun, to be inclosed in a huge hollow sphere of chrystral, which should attemper its rays like a transparent veil, and give milder and gentler influences to the burning beams of it, and yet transmit every desirable and useful portion of light or heat, this would be a happy emblem of the man *Christ Jesus, in whom dwells all the fulness of the Godhead bodily;* Col. ii. 9. It is the Lamb of God, who in a mild and gracious manner, conveys the blessings

originally derived from God his Father, to all the saints. We partake of them in our measure in this lower world, among his churches here on earth; but it is with a nobler influence, and in a more sublime degree, the blessings of paradise are diffused through all the mansions of glory by this illustrious medium of conveyance, Jesus, the Son of God; and there can be no night nor coldness, death nor darkness in this happy state of separate souls.

When the bodies of the saints shall be raised again, and re-united to their proper spirits, when they shall ascend to the place of their final heaven and supreme happiness, we know not what manner of bodies they shall be, what sort of senses they shall be furnished with, nor how many powers of conversing with the corporeal world shall be bestowed upon them. Whether they shall have such organs of sensation as eyes and ears, and stand in need of such light as we derive from the sun or moon, is not absolutely certain. The Scripture tells us, it shall not be a body of flesh and blood; These are not materials refined enough for the heavenly state; *that which is corruptible cannot inherit incorruption*; 1 Cor. xv. 50. But this we may be assured of, that whatsoever inlets of knowledge, whatever avenues of pleasure, whatever delightful sensations are necessary to make the inhabitants of that world happy, they shall be all united in that spiritual body, which God will prepare for the new-raised saints. If eyes and ears shall belong to that glorified body, those sensitive powers shall be nobly enlarged and made more delightfully susceptive of richer shares of knowledge and joy.

Or, what if we shall have that body furnished with such unknown mediums or organs of sensation, as shall make light and sound such as we here partake of unnecessary to us? These organs shall certainly be such as shall transcend all the advantages that we receive in this present state, from sounds or sunbeams. There shall be no disconsolate darkness, nor any tiresome silence there. There shall be no night to interrupt the business or the pleasures of that everlasting day. Or what if the whole body shall be endued all over with the senses of seeing and hearing? What if these sort of sensations shall be diffused throughout all that immortal body, as feeling is diffused through all our present mortal flesh? What if God himself shall in a more illustrious manner irradiate all the powers of the body and spirit, and communicate the light of knowledge, holiness, and joy, in a superior manner to what we can now conceive or imagine? This is certain, that darkness in every sense, with all the inconveniences and unhappy consequences of it, is and must be for ever banished from the heavenly state. There is no night there.

When our Lord Jesus Christ shall have given up his mediatorial kingdom to the Father, and have presented all his saints spotless and without blemish before his throne, it is hard for us mortals in the present state to say, how far he shall be the everlasting medium of the communication of divine blessings to the happy inhabitants on high. Yet when we consider that the saints and angels and the whole happy creation are gathered together in him, as their head,\* it is certain they shall all be accounted in some sense his members; and it is highly probable he, as their head, shall be for ever active in communicating and diffusing the unknown blessings of that world, amongst all the inhabitants of it, who are gathered and united in him.

I come in the last place to make a few remarks upon the foregoing discourse, and in order to render them more effectual for our spiritual advantage, I shall consider the words of my text, *there shall be no night there*, in their metaphorical or spiritual meaning as well as in their literal sense. There is no night of ignorance or error in the mind, no night of guilt or of sorrow in the soul: But the blessed above shall dwell surrounded with the light of divine knowledge, they shall walk in the light of holiness, and they shall be for ever filled with the light of consolation and joy, as I have explained it in the beginning of this discourse.

The first remark then is this: "When heaven, earth, and hell, are compared together with relation to light and darkness, or night and day," we then see them in their proper distinctions and aspects. Every thing is set in its most distinguishing situation and appearance, when it is compared with things which are most opposite. The earth on which we dwell, during this state of trial, has neither all day nor all night belonging to it, but sometimes light appears and again darkness, whether in a natural or spiritual sense.

Though there be long seasons of darkness in the winter, and darkness in the summer also, in its constant returns, divides one day from another, yet the God of nature hath given us a larger portion of light than there is of darkness throughout the whole globe of the earth: And this benefit we receive by the remaining beams of the sun after its setting, and by the assistance of the moon and the stars of heaven. Blessed be God for the moon and stars, as well as for the sunbeams and the brightness of noon. Blessed be God for all the lights of nature, but we still bless him more for the light of the gospel, and for any rays from heaven, any beams of the sun of righteousness, which diffuse in lower measures, knowl-

\* The Greek word ἀνακεφαλαιόω, used in *Eph.* i. 10. favors this meaning, and perhaps *Col.* i. 20. includes the same thing.

edge and holiness and comfort, among the inhabitants of this our world. God is here manifesting his love and grace in such proportions as he thinks proper. Some beams of the heavenly world break out upon us here in this dark region. God the spring of all our light, and the Lamb of God by his Spirit, communicates sufficient light to us, to guide us on in our way to that heavenly country.

In hell there is all night and darkness, thick darkness in every sense, for the God of glory is absent there as to any manifestations of his face and favor. And therefore it is often called *outer darkness, where there is weeping, and wailing, and gnashing of teeth.* There is no holiness, there is no comfort, there are no benefits of the creation, no blessings of grace ; all are forfeited and gone forever. It is everlasting night and *blackness of darkness* in that world : Horror of soul without a beam of refreshment from the face of God, or the Lamb for ever. The devils are now *reserved in everlasting chains under darkness to the judgment of the great day* ; Jude, verse 6. But then their confinement shall be closer, and their darkness, guilt and sorrow shall be more overwhelming. Is it lawful for me in this place to mention the description which Milton, our English poet, gives of their wretched habitation ?

“ A dungeon horrible on all sides round,  
 As one great furnace flam’d; yet from those flames  
 No light, but rather darkness visible  
 Serv’d only to discover sights of woe ;  
 Regions of sorrow, doleful shades, where peace  
 And rest can never dwell; hope never comes,  
 That comes to all : But torture without end  
 Still urges, and a fiery deluge fed  
 With ever-burning sulphur unconsum’d.  
 Such place eternal justice had prepared  
 For rebel-angels ! here their pris’n ordain’d  
 In utter darkness, and their portion set  
 As far remov’d from God and light of heav’n,  
 As from the centre thrice to th’ utmost pole.”

*To this the poet adds,*

“ Oh, how unlike the place from whence they fell !”

How unlike to that heaven which I have been describing, in which there is no night ; and all the evils of darkness, in every sense, are for ever secluded from that happy region, where knowledge, holiness and joy, are all inseparable and immortal.

II. “ What light of every kind we are made partakers of here

on earth, let us use it with holy thankfulness, with zeal and religious improvement." Hereby we may be assisted and animated to travel on through the mingled stages and scenes of light and darkness in this world, till we arrive at the inheritance of the saints in perfect light. It is a glorious blessing to this dark world, that the light of Christianity is added to the light of Judaism and the light of nature; and that the Law of Moses and the Gospel of Christ are set before us, in this nation, in their distinct views, on purpose to make our way to happiness more evident and easy. May *the song of Moses, and the song of the Lamb* be sung in our land! But let us never rest satisfied till the light that is let into our minds become a spring of divine life within us, a life of knowledge, holiness and comfort. Let us not be found amongst the number of those who when *light is come into the world, love darkness rather than light*, lest we fall under their condemnation; *John iii. 19.* Let us never rest till we see the evidences of the children of God wrought in us with power; till the *day spring that has visited us from on high* has entered into our spirits, and refined and moulded them into the divine image; till we who are by nature all darkness are made light in the Lord.

Oh what a blessed change does the converting grace of Christ make in the soul of a son or daughter of Adam! It is like the beauty and pleasure which the rising morning diffuses over the face of the earth after a night of storm and darkness: It is so much of heaven let into all the chambers of the soul: It is then only that we begin to know ourselves aright, and know God in his most awful and most lovely manifestations: It is in this light we see the hateful evil of every sin, the beauty of holiness, the worth of the gospel of Christ and of his salvation. It is a light that carries divine heat and life with it; it renews all the powers of the spirit, and introduces holiness, hope and joy, in the room of folly and guilt, sin, darkness and sorrow.

III. If God has wrought this sacred and divine change in our souls, if we are made the children of light, or if we profess to have felt this change, and hope for an interest in this bright inheritance of the saints, *let us put away all the works of darkness*, with hatred and detestation. *Let us walk in the light of truth and holiness;* *Eph. v. 8.* *Ye were once darkness, but are now light in the Lord;* *walk as children of light.* And the apostle repeats his exhortation to the Thessalonians. *Ye are all children of the light, and of the day,* and not the sons of night or darkness; *therefore let us not sleep as do others, but let us watch and be sober;*—*putting on the breastplate of faith and love, and for an helmet the hope of salva-*

*tion, for God hath not appointed us to wrath, but to obtain salvation by our Lord Jesus Christ ; 1 Thess. v. 5-9.*

To animate every Christian to this holy care and watchfulness, let us think what a terrible disappointment it will be, after we have made a bright profession of Christianity in our lives, to lie down in death in a state of sin and guilt, and to awake in the world of spirits in the midst of the groans and agonies of hell, surrounded and covered with everlasting darkness. Let our public profession be as illustrious and bright as it will, yet if we indulge works of darkness in secret, night and darkness will be our eternal portion, with the anguish of conscience and the terrors of the Almighty, without one glimpse of hope or relief. It is only those who walk in the light of holiness here, who can be fit to dwell in the presence of a God of holiness hereafter. *Light is sown only for the righteous, and joy for the upright in heart ; Psalm xcvi. 11.* and it shall break out one day from amongst the clouds, a glorious harvest ; but only the sons and the daughters of light shall taste of the blessed fruits of it.

Think again with yourselves when you are tempted to sin and folly, what if I should be cut off on a sudden, practising the works of darkness, and my soul be summoned into the eternal world, covered with guilt and defilement ? Shall I then be fit for the world of light ? Will the God of light ever receive me to his dwelling ? Do I not hereby render myself unfit company for the angels of light ? And what if I should be sent down, to dwell among the spirits of darkness, since I have imitated their sinful manners and obeyed their cursed influences ? O may such thoughts as these dwell upon our spirits with an awful solemnity, and be a perpetual guard against defiling our garments with any iniquity, lest our Lord should come and find us thus polluted. Let us walk onwards in the paths of light which are discovered to us in the word of God, and which are illustrated by his holy ordinances, to guide us through the clouds and shades, which attend us in this wilderness, till our Lord Jesus shall come with all his surrounding glories, and take us to the full possession of the inheritance in light.

IV. "Under our darkest nights, our most inactive and heavy hours, our most uncomfortable seasons here on earth, let us remember we are travelling to a world of light and joy." If we happen to lie awake, in midnight darkness, and count the tedious hours one after another in a mournful succession, under any of the maladies of nature, or the sorrows of this life, let us comfort ourselves that we are not shut up in eternal night and darkness without hope, but we are still making our way towards that country,

where there is no night, where there is neither sin nor pain, malady nor sorrow.

What if the blessed God is pleased to try us by the withholding of light from our eyes for a season? What if we are called to seek our duty in dark providences, or are perplexed in deep and difficult controversies, wherein we cannot find the light of truth? What if we "sit in darkness and mourning, and see no light, and the beams of divine consolation are cut off, let us *still trust in the name of the Lord, and stay ourselves upon our God*, especially as he manifests himself in the Lamb that was slain, the blessed medium of his mercy." *Isaiah l. 10.* Let us learn to say with the prophet Micah, in the spirit of faith; *Micah vii. 8, 9. When I sit in darkness, the Lord will be a light unto me;—he will bring me forth to the light and I shall behold his righteousness.*

"Blessed be God, that the night of ignorance, grief, or affliction, which attends us in this world, is not everlasting night. Heaven and glory are at hand; wait and watch for the morning star, for Jesus and the resurrection. Roll on apace in your appointed course, ye suns and moons, and all ye twinkling enlighteners of the sky, carry on the changing seasons of light and darkness in this lower world with your utmost speed, till you have finished all my appointed months of continuance here. The light of faith shews me the dawning of that glorious day, which shall finish all my nights and darknesses for ever. Make haste, O delightful morning, and delay not my hopes. Let me hasten, let me arrive at that blessed inheritance, those mansions of paradise, where night is never known, but one eternal day shall make our knowledge, our holiness, and our joy eternal." *Amen.*

## SERMON IV.

### SAFETY IN THE GRAVE, AND JOY AT THE RESURRECTION.

"O that thou wouldest hide me in the grave, that thou wouldest keep me secret until thy wrath be past, that thou wouldest appoint me a set time and remember me! If a man die shall he live again? All the days of my appointed time will I wait till my change come. Thou shalt call and I will answer thee: thou wilt have a desire to the work of thy hands."—JOB xiv. 13, 14, 15.

BEFORE we attempt to make any improvement of these words of Job or our present edification, it is necessary that we search out the true meaning of them. There are two general senses of these three verses, which are given by some of the most considerable interpreters of Scripture, and they are exceedingly different from each other.

The first is this, "Some suppose Job, under the extremity of his anguish, to long after death here, as he does in some other parts of this book, and to desire that God would cut him off from the land of the living, and hide him in the grave, or, at least, take him away from the present stage of action, and conceal him in some retired and solitary place, dark as the grave is, till all the days which might be designed for his pain and sorrow were finished: And that God would appoint him a time for his restoration to health and happiness again in this world, and raise him to the possession of it, by calling him out of that dark and solitary place of retreat; and then Job would answer him, and appear with pleasure at such a call of providence."

Others give this sense of the words, "that though the pressing and overwhelming sorrows of this good man constrained him to long for death, and he entreated of God that he might be sent to the grave as a hiding-place, and thus be delivered from his present calamities, yet he had some divine glimpse of a resurrection or living again, and the hopes for the happiness of a future state when God should call him out of the grave. He knew that the blessed God would have a desire to restore *the work of his own*

hands to life again, and Job would answer the call of his God unto a resurrection with holy pleasure and joy."

Now, there are four or five reasons which incline me to prefer this latter sense of the words, and to shew that the comforts and hope which Job aspires to in this place, are only to be derived from a resurrection to final happiness.

Reason I. The express words of the text are, *O that thou wouldest hide me in the grave!* not in a darksome place like the grave; and where the literal sense of the words is plain and agreeable to the context, there is no need of making metaphors to explain them. There is nothing that can encourage us to suppose that Job had any hope of happiness in this world again, after he was gone down to the grave; and therefore he would not make so unreasonable a petition to the great God. This seems to be too foolish and too hopeless a request for us to put into the mouth of so wise and good a man.

II. He seems to limit the continuance of man in the state of death, to the duration of the heavens; verse 12. *Man lieth down and riseth not till the heavens be no more;* not absolutely for ever does Job desire to be hidden in the grave, but till the dissolution of all these visible things, these heavens and this earth, and the great rising-day for the sons of men. These words seem to have a plain aspect towards the resurrection. And especially when he adds, *they shall not be wakened nor raised out of their sleep.* The brutes when dying are never said to sleep in Scripture, because they shall never rise again; but this is a frequent word used to signify the death of man, both in the Old Testament and in the New, because he only lies down in the grave for a season, as in a bed of sleep, in order to awake and arise hereafter.

III. In other places of this book, Job gives us some eminent hints of his hope of a resurrection, especially that divine passage and prophecy, when he spake as one surrounded with a vision of glory, and filled with the light and the joy of faith; Job xix. 25, 27. *I know that my Redeemer liveth, and that he shall stand at the latter day upon the earth; and though after my skin worms destroy this body, yet in my flesh shall I see God; whom I shall see for myself, and my eyes shall behold, and not another; though my reins be consumed within me.* But in many parts of this book the good man lets us know, that he had no manner of hope of any restoration to health and peace in this life; Job vii. 6, 7, 8. *My days—are spent without hope:—my eye shall no more see good: the eye of him that hath seen me shall see me no more: thy eyes are upon me, and I am not.* Verse 21. *Now shall I sleep in*

*the dust, and thou shalt seek me in the morning, but I shall not be.* Job xvii. 15. *Where is now my hope? As for my hope, who shall see it?* He and his hope seemed to go down to the bars of the pit together, and to rest in the dust. And if Job had no hope of a restoration in this world, then his hopes must point to the resurrection of the dead.

IV. If we turn these verses here, as well as that noble passage in Job xix. to the more evangelical sense of a resurrection, the truths which are contained in the one and the other are all supported by the language of the New Testament; and the express words of both these texts are much more naturally and easily applied to the evangelical sense, without any strain and difficulty. The expressions of Job in chapter xix. *I know that my Redeemer liveth,* have been rescued by many wise interpreters from that poor and low sense which has been forced upon them, by those who will not allow Job to have any prospect beyond this life; and it has been made to appear to be a bright glimpse of divine light and joy, a ray or vision of the Sun of righteousness breaking in between the dark clouds of his pressing sorrow: And that the words of my text demand the same sort of interpretation, will appear further by these short remarks, and this paraphrase upon them. Job had been speaking, verses 7–10, &c. That *there is hope of a tree when it is cut down, that it will sprout again visibly, and bring forth boughs;* but when man gives up the ghost, he is no more visible upon earth: *Where is he?* Job does not deny his future existence, but only intimates that he does not appear in the place where he was; and in the following verses he does not say, a dying man shall never rise, or shall never be awakened out of his sleep, but asserts that he rises not till the dissolution of these heavens and these visible things: And by calling death a sleep, he supposes an awakening time, though it may be distant and far off.

Then he proceeds to long for death, *O that thou wouldest hide me in the grave! that thou wouldest keep me secret till thy wrath be past!* till these times and seasons of sorrow be ended, which seems to be the effect of divine wrath or anger: But then I entreat thou wouldest appoint me a set time for my tarrying in the grave, and remember me in order to raise me again. Then, with a sort of surprise of faith and pleasure, he adds, *if a man die shall he live again?* Shall these dry bones live? And he answers in the language of hope: *All the days of that appointed time of thine I will wait till that glorious change shall come.* Thou shalt call from heaven, and I will answer thee from the dust of death. I will appear at thy call, and say, *Here am I: thou*

*wilt have a desire to the work of thy hands,* to raise me again from the dead, whom thou hast made of clay, and fashioned me into life. From the words thus expounded, we may draw these several observations, and make a short reflection upon each of them as we pass along.

Observation I. This world is a place wherein good men are exposed to great calamities, and they are ready to think the anger or wrath of God appears in them.

II. The grave is God's known hiding-place for his people.

III. God has appointed a set time in his own counsels for all his children to continue in death.

IV. The lively view of a happy resurrection, and a well-grounded hope of this blessed change, is a solid and divine comfort to the saints of God, under all trials of every kind, both in life and death.

V. The saints of God who are resting in their beds of dust, will arise joyfully at the call of their heavenly Father.

VI. God takes delight in his works of nature, but much more when they are dignified and adorned by the operations of divine grace.

VII. How much are we indebted to God for the revelation of the New Testament, which teaches us to find out the blessings which are contained in the Old, and to fetch out the glories and treasures which are concealed there!

Let us dwell awhile upon each of these, and endeavor to improve them by a particular application.

Observation I. "This world is a place wherein good men are exposed to great calamities, and they are ready to think the anger or wrath of God appears in them." This mortal life, and this present state of things, as surrounded with crosses and disappointments, the loss of our dearest friends, as well as our own pains and sicknesses, have so much anguish and misery attending them, that they seem to be the seasons of divine wrath, and they grieve and pain the spirit of many a pious man, under a sense of the anger of his God. It must be confessed in general, that misery is the effect of sin, for sin and sorrow came into the world together. It is granted also, that God sometimes afflicts his people in anger, and corrects them in his hot displeasure, when they have sinned against him in a remarkable manner: but this is not always the case.

The great God was not really angry with Job when he suffered him to fall into such complicated distresses; for it is plain, that while he delivered him up into the hands of Satan to be afflicted, he vindicates and honors him with a divine testimony concerning

his piety; *Job i. 8.* *There is none like him in the earth, a perfect and an upright man, one that feareth God and avoideth evil.* Nor was he angry with his Son Jesus Christ when *it pleased the Father to bruise him and put him to grief, when he made his soul an offering for sin, and he was stricken, smitten of God and afflicted;* Isa. lii. 4, 10. To these we may add Paul, the best of the apostles, and the greatest of Christians, who was abundant in labors and sufferings above the rest. See a dismal catalogue of his calamities, *2 Cor. xi. 23-27.* What variety of wretchedness, what terrible persecutions from men, what repeated strokes of distress came upon him by the providence of God, which appeared like the effects of divine wrath or anger! But they were plainly designed for more divine and blessed purposes, both with regard to himself, and to all the succeeding ages of the Christian church.

God does not always smite his own people to punish sin, and shew his anger; but these sufferings are often appointed for the trial of their Christian virtues and graces, for the exercise of their humility and their patience, for the proof of their stedfastness in religion, for the honor of the grace of God in them, and for the increase of their own future weight of glory. *Blessed is the man that endureth temptation, for when he is tried he shall receive the crown of life which the Lord hath promised to them that love him;* James i. 12. *The devil shall cast some of you into prison, that you may be tried; and ye shall have tribulation ten days; Be thou faithful unto death, and I will give thee a crown of life;* Rev. ii. 10. *Our light afflictions which are but for a moment, are working for us a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory;* 2 Cor. iv. 17. However, upon the whole, this world is a very painful and troublesome place to the children of God: They are subject here to many weaknesses and sins, temptations and follies; they are in danger of new defilements; they go through many threatening perils and many real sorrows, which either are the effects of the displeasure of God, or, at least, carry an appearance of divine anger in them: But there is a time when these shall be finished, and sorrow shall have its last period: There is a time when these calamities will be overpassed, and shall return no more for ever.

Reflection. "Why then, O my soul, why shouldst thou be so fond of dwelling in this present world? Why shouldst thou be desirous of a long continuance in it? Hast thou never found sorrows and afflictions enough among the scenes of life, to make thee weary of them? And when sorrow and sin have joined together, have they not grievously embittered this life unto thee? Wilt thou

never be weaned from these sensible scenes of flesh and blood? Hast thou such a love to the darknesses, the defilements, and the uneasiness which are found in such a prison as this, as to make thee unwilling to depart when God shall call? Hast thou dwelt so long in this tabernacle of clay, and dost thou not *groan, being burdened?* Hast thou no desire to a release into that upper and better world, where sorrows, sins, and temptations have no place, and where there shall never be the least appearance or suspicion of the displeasure of thy God towards thee?"

Observation II. "The grave is God's known hiding-place for his people." It is his appointed shelter and retreat for his favorites, when he finds them overpressed either with present dangers or calamities, or when he foresees huge calamities and dangers, like storms and billows, ready to overtake them; *Isaiah lvii. 1.* *The righteous is taken away from the evil to come.* God our heavenly Father beholds this evil advancing forward through all the pleasant smiles of nature, and all the peaceful circumstances that surround us. He hides his children in the grave from a thousand sins, and sorrows, and distresses of this life, which they foresaw not: And even when they are actually beset behind and before, so that there seems to be no natural way for their escape, God calls them aside into the chambers of death, in the same sort of language as he uses in another case; *Isaiah xxvi. 20.* *Come, my people, enter thou into thy chambers, and shut thy doors about thee, hide thyself as it were for a little moment, until the indignation be overpassed.*

And yet perhaps it is possible that this very language of the Lord in *Isaiah* may refer to the grave, as God's hiding-place, for the verse before promises a resurrection. *Thy dead men shall live; together with my dead body shall they arise: Awake and sing ye that dwell in the dust: For thy dew is as the dew of herbs, and the earth shall cast out the dead.* And if we may suppose this last verse to have been transposed by any ancient transcribers, so as to have followed originally verse 20, or 21, it is very natural then to interpret the whole paragraph concerning death, as God's hiding-place for his people, and their rising again through the virtue of the resurrection of Christ as their joyful release. Many a time God is pleased to shorten the labors, and travels, and fatigues of good men in this wilderness, and he opens a door of rest to them where he pleases, and perhaps surprises them into a state of safety and peace, *where the weary are at rest, and the wicked cease from troubling;* and holy *Job* seems to desire this favor from his Maker here; *Job iii. 17.*

Sometimes indeed, in the history of this book, he seems to break

out into these desires in too rude and angry a manner of expression ; and in a fit of criminal impatience he murmurs against God for upholding him in the land of the living : But at other times, as in this text, he represents his desires, with more decency and submission. Every desire to die is not to be construed sinful and criminal. Nature may ask of God a relief from its agonies and a period to its sorrows, nor does grace utterly forbid it, if there be also an humble submission and resignation to the will of God, such as we find exemplified by our blessed Saviour, *Father, if it be thy will, let this cup pass from me ; yet not as I will but as thou wilt* ; Matt. xxvi. 39-42. On this second observation I desire to make these three reflections :

Reflection I. Though a good man knows that death was originally appointed as a curse for sin, yet his faith can trust God to turn that curse into a blessing : He can humbly ask his Maker to release him from the painful bonds of life, to hasten the slow approaches of death, and to hide him in the grave from some overwhelming sorrows. This is the glory of God in his covenant of grace with the children of men, that he *turns curses into blessings* ; Deut. xxiii. 5. And the grave which was designed as a prison for sinners, is become a place of shelter to the saints, where they are hidden and secured from rising sorrows and calamities. It is God's known hiding-place for his own children from the envy and the rage of men, from all the known and unknown agonies of nature, the diseases of the flesh, and the distresses of human life, which perhaps might be overbearing and intolerable.

"Why, O my fearful soul, why shouldst thou be afraid of dying ? Why shouldst thou be frightened at the dark shadows of the grave, when thou art weary with the toils and crosses of the day ? Hast thou not often desired *the shadow of the evening*, and longed for the bed of natural sleep, where thy fatigues and thy sorrows may be forgotten for a season ? And is not the grave itself a sweet sleeping-place for the saints, wherein they lie down and forget their distresses, and feel none of the miseries of human life, and especially since it is softened and sanctified by the Son of God lying down there ? Why shouldst thou be afraid to lay thy head in the dust ? It is but entering into God's hiding-place, into his chambers of rest and repose : It is but committing the flesh, the meaner part of thy composition, to his care in the dark for a short season : He will hide thee there, and keep thee in safety from the dreadful trials which perhaps would overwhelm thy spirit. Sometimes in the course of his providence he may find it necessary, that some spreading calamity should overtake the place where thou

dweldest, or some distressing stroke fall upon thy family, or thy friends, but he will hide thee under ground before it comes, and thus disappoint all thy fears, and lay every perplexing thought into rest and silence."

II. Let it be ever remembered, that the grave is *God's hiding-place* and not our own: We are to venture into it without terror when he calls us; but he does not suffer us to break into it our own way without his call. Death and life are in the hands of God, and he never gave the keys of them to mortal men to let themselves out of this world when they please, nor to enter into his hiding-place without his leave.

"Bear up then, O my soul, under all the sorrows and trials of this present state till God himself shall say, *It is finished*; John xix. 20. till our blessed Jesus, who has the keys put into his hands, shall open the door of death, and give thee an entrance into that dark and peaceful retreat. It is a safe and silent refuge from the bustle and the noise, the labors and the troubles of life; but he that forces it open with his own hands, how will he dare to appear before God in the world of spirits? What will he answer, when with a dreadful frown the great God shall demand of him, *Friend, how camest thou in hither?* Matt. xxii. 12. Who sent for thee, or gave thee leave to come? Such a wretch must venture upon so rash an action at the peril of the wrath of God, and his own eternal destruction. Our blessed Jesus, who has all the vast scheme of divine counsels before his eyes, by having the books of his Father's decrees put into his hands, he knows how long it is proper for thee, O Christian, to fight and labor, to wrestle and strive with sins, temptations and difficulties in the present life: He knows best in what moment to put a period to them, and to pronounce thee conqueror. Fly not from the field of battle for want of holy fortitude, though thy enemies and thy dangers be never so many, nor dare to dismiss thyself from thy appointed post, till the Lord of life pronounce the word of thy dismission.

"Sometimes I have been ready to say within myself, Why is my life prolonged in sorrow? Why are my days lengthened out to see further wretchedness? Methinks the grave should be ready for me, and the house appointed for all the living; Job xvii. 1. xxx. 23. What can I do further for God or for man here on earth, since my nature pines away with painful sickness, my nerves are unstrung, my spirits dissipated, and my best powers of acting are enfeebled and almost lost? Peace, peace, O thou complaining spirit! Dost thou know the counsels of the Almighty, and the secret designs of thy God and Saviour? He has many deep and unknown purposes

in continuing his children amidst heavy sorrows, which they can never penetrate or learn in this world. Silence and submission becomes thee at all times. *Father, not my will but thy will be done ; Luke xxii. 42.*

“ And let it be hinted to thee, O my soul, that it is much more honorable to be weary of this life, because of the sins and temptations of it, than because of the toils and sorrows that attend it. If we must *groan in this tabernacle being burdened* ; 2 Cor. v. 4. let the snares, and the dangers, and the defilements of it be the chief springs of thy groaning and the warmest motives to request a release. God loves to see his people more afraid of sin than of sorrow. If thy corruptions are so strong, and the temptations of life so unhappily surround thee, that thou art daily crying out, *Who shall deliver thee from the body of sin and death* ; Rom. vii. 24. then thou mayest more honorably send up a wish to heaven, *O that I had the wings of a dove, that I might fly away and be at rest!* Psalm lv. 6. *O that God would hide me in the grave* from my prevailing iniquities, and from the ruffling and disquieting influence of my own follies and my daily temptations ! But never be thou quite weary of doing or suffering the will of thy heavenly Father, though he should continue thee in this mortal life a length of years beyond thy desires, and should withhold thee from his secret place of retreat and rest.” A constant and joyful readiness at the call of God to depart hence, with a cheerful patience to continue here during his pleasure, is the most perfect and blessed temper that a Christian can arrive at : It gives God the highest glory, and keeps the soul in the sweetest peace.

III. This one thought that the “grave is God’s hiding-place,” should compose our spirits to silence, and abate our mourning for the loss of friends, who have given sufficient evidence that they are the children of God. Their heavenly Father has seized them from the midst of their trials, dangers and difficulties, and given them a secure refuge in his own appointed place of rest and safety. Jesus has opened the door of the grave with his golden key, and hath let them into a chamber of repose : He has concealed them in a silent retreat, where temptation and sin cannot reach them, and where anguish and misery never come.

When I have lost therefore a dear and delightful relative or friend, or perhaps many of them in a short season are called successively down to the dust, let me say thus within myself, “ It is their God and my God has done it : He saw what new temptations were ready to surround them in the circumstances of life wherein they stood : He beheld the trials and difficulties that were ready to encompass

them on all sides, and his love made a way for their escape : He opened the dark retreat of death, and hid them there from a thousand perils which might have plunged them into guilt and defilement : He beheld this as the proper season to give them a release from a world of labor and toil, vanity and vexation, sin and sorrow : *They are taken away from the evil to come*, and I will learn to complain no more. The blessed Jesus, to whom they had devoted themselves, well knew what allurements of gaiety and joy might have been too prevalent among them, and he gave them a kind escape lest their souls should suffer any real detriment, lest their strict profession of piety should be soiled or dishonored : He knew how much they were able to bear, and he would *lay upon them no further burden* : He saw rising difficulties approaching, and new perils coming upon them beyond their strength, and he fulfils his own promises, and glorifies his own faithfulness, by opening the door of his well-known hiding-place, and giving them a safe refuge there. He keeps them there in secret from the corruptions of a public life, and the multiplied dangers of a degenerate age, which might have divided their hearts from God and things heavenly ; And perhaps he guards them also in that dark retreat from some long and languishing sickness, some unknown distress, some overbearing flood of misery, which was like to come upon them had they continued longer on the stage of life.

“ Let this silence thy murmuring thoughts, O my soul ! let this dry up thy tears, which are ready to overflow on such an occasion. Dare not pronounce it a stroke of anger from the hand of God, who divided them from the tempting or distressing scenes of this world, and kindly removed them out of the way of danger. This was the wisest method of his love, to guard them from many a folly and many a sorrow, which he foresaw just at the door.” Will the wounded and complaining heart go on to groan and murmur still, “ But my son was carried off in the prime of life, or my daughter in her blooming years ; they stood flourishing in the vigor of their nature, and it was my delight to behold their growing appearances of virtue and goodness, and that in the midst of ease and plenty, and prospects of happiness, so far as this world can afford it ? ” But could you look through the next year to the end of it ? Could you penetrate into future events, and survey the scenes of seven years to come ? Could your heart assure itself of the real possession of this imaginary view of happiness and peace ? Perhaps the blessed God saw the clouds gathering afar off, and at a great distance of time, and in much kindness he housed your favorite from unknown trials, dangers, and sorrows. So a prudent gardener, who is acquainted

with the sky, and skilful in the signs of the seasons, even in the month of May, foresees a heavy tempest rising in the edge of the horizon, while a vulgar eye observes nothing but sunshine ; and he who knows the worth and the tenderness of some special plants in his garden, houses them in haste, lest they be exposed and demolished by the sweeping rain or hail.

You say, "These children were in the bloom of life, and in the most desirable appearance of joy and satisfaction :" But is not that also usually the most dangerous season of life, and the hour of most powerful temptation ? Was not that the time when their passions might have been too hard for them, and the deluding pleasures of life stood round them with the most perilous assault ? And what if God, out of pure compassion, saw it necessary to hide them from an army of perils at once, and to carry them off the stage of life with more purity and honor ? Surely, when the great God has appointed it, when the blessed Jesus has done it, we would not rise up in opposition and say, "But I would have had them live longer here at all adventures : I wish they were alive again, let the consequence be what it will :" This is not the voice of faith or patience ; this is not the language of holy submission and love to God, nor can our souls approve of such irregular storms of ungoverned affection, which oppose themselves to the divine will, and ruffle the soul with criminal disquietude.

There are many, even of the children of God, who had left a more unblemished and a more honorable character behind them, if they had died much sooner. The latter end of life hath sometimes sullied their brightness, and tarnished the glory they had acquired in a hopeful youth : Their growing years have fallen under such temptations, and been defiled and disgraced by such failings, as would have been entirely prevented had they been summoned away into God's hiding-place some years before. Our blessed Jesus *walks among the roses and lilies* in the garden of his church, and when he sees a wintry storm coming upon some tender *plants of righteousness*, he hides them in the earth to preserve life in them, that they may bloom with new glories when they shall be raised from that bed. The blessed God acts like a tender Father, and consults the safety and the honor of his children, when the hand of his mercy snatches them away before that powerful temptation comes, which he foresees would have defiled and distressed, and almost destroyed them. They are not lost, but they are gone to rest a little sooner than we are. Peace be to that bed of dust where they are hidden, by the hand of their God, from unknown dangers ! Blessed be our

Lord Jesus, who has the keys of the grave, and never opens it for his favorites but in the wisest season !

III. "God has appointed a set time in his own counsels for all his children to continue in death :" Those whom he has hidden in the grave he remembers they lie there, and he will not suffer them to abide in the dust for ever. When Job intreats of God that he may be hidden from his sorrows in the dust of death, he requests also that God would appoint a set time for his release, and remember him. His faith seems to have had a glimpse of the blessed resurrection. Our senses and our carnal passions would cry out, where is Abraham, and Isaac, and Jacob, and the rest of the ancient worthies, who have been long sleepers in their beds of repose for many thousand years ? But faith assures us, that God numbers the days and the months of their concealment under ground, he knows where their dust lies, and where to find every scattered atom against the great restoring day. They are unseen indeed, and forgotten of men, but then they are under the eye and the keeping of the blessed God : He watches over their sleeping dust, and while the world has forgotten and lost even their names, they are every moment under the eye of God, for they stand written in his book of life, with the name of the Lamb at the head of them. Jesus, his Son, had but three days appointed him to dwell in this hiding-place, and he arose again at the appointed hour. Other good men, who were gone to their grave not long before him, rose again at the resurrection of Christ, and made a visit to many in Jerusalem : Their appointed hiding place was but for a short season ; and all the children of God shall be remembered in their proper seasons in faithfulness to his Son to whom he has given them : The head is raised to the mansions of glory, and the members must not for ever lie in dust.

Reflection. Then let all the saints of God wait with patience for the appointed time, when he will call them down to death, and let them lie down in their secret beds of repose, and in a waiting frame commit their dust to his care till the resurrection. *All the days of my appointed time*, says Job, *I will wait till my change come*. The word appointed time, is supposed to signify "warfare" in the Hebrew : As a sentinel, when he is fixed to his post by his general, he waits there till he has orders for a release. And this clause of the verse may refer either to dying or rising again, for either of them is a very great and important change, passing upon human nature, whether from life to death, or from death to life. It is said by the prophet Isaiah, chapter xxviii. 16. *He that believeth shall not make haste* ; that is, he that trusteth in the wisdom and the promised mercy

of God, will not be too urgent or importunate in any of his desires : It is for want of faith that nature sometimes is in too much haste to die, as Job in some of his expressions appears to have been, or as Elijah perhaps discovered himself when he was wandering in the wilderness, disconsolate and almost despairing ; or as the prophet Jeremiah sufficiently manifested, when he cursed the day of his birth ; or as Jonah was, that peevish prophet, when he was angry with God for not taking away his life ; but the ground of it was, he was vexed because God did not destroy Nineveh, according to his prophecy : There are certain blemishes of the children of God left upon record in his word, to give us warning of our danger of impatience, and to guard us against their sins and follies. And since we know that God has appointed the seasons of our entrance into death, and into the state of the resurrection, we should humbly commit the disposal of ourselves to the hand of our God, who will bestow upon us the most needful blessings in the most proper season.

Do not *the spirits of the just made perfect* wait in patience for the great and blessed rising day which God has appointed, and for the illustrious change of their bodies from corruption and darkness to light, and life, and glory ? God has promised it, and that suffices, and supports their waiting spirits, though they know not the hour. *The Father keeps that in his own hand* ; Acts i. 7. and perhaps reveals it to none but his Son Jesus, who is exalted to be the governor and judge of the world. There are millions of souls waiting in that separate state for the accomplishment of these last and best promises, ready to shout and rejoice when they shall see and feel that bright morning dawning upon them.

“ Wait therefore, O my soul, as becomes a child of God in the wilderness among many trials, darkesses, and distresses. He has stripped thee perhaps of one comfort after another, and thy friends and relatives in succession are called down to the dust ; they are released from their conflicts, and are placed far out of the reach of every temptation ; and it is not thy business to prescribe to God at what hour he shall release thee also. Whensoever he is pleased to call thee to lay down thy flesh in the dust, and to enter into God’s hiding-place, meet thou the summons with holy courage, satisfaction, and joy, *enter into the chamber* of rest till all the days of sin, sorrow, and wretchedness, are overpassed : Lie down there in a waiting frame, and commit thy flesh to his care and keeping, till the hour in which he has appointed thy glorious change.”

IV. “The lively view of a happy resurrection, and a well-

grounded hope of this blessed change, is a solid and divine comfort to the saints of God, under all trials of every kind, both in life and death." The faith and hope of a joyful rising-day has supported the children of God under long distresses and huge agonies of sorrow which they sustain here. It is the expectation of this desirable day, that animates the soul with vigor and life to fulfil every painful and dangerous duty. It is for this we expose ourselves to the bitter reproaches and persecutions of the wicked world ; it is for this that we conflict with all our adversaries on earth, and all the powers of darkness that are sent from hell to annoy us ; it is this joyful expectation that bears up our spirit under every present burden and calamity of life. What could we do in such a painful and dying world, or how could we bear with patience the long fatigues of such a wretched life, if we had no hope of rising again from the dead ? Surely, *we are the most miserable of all men in the days of public persecution, if we had hope only in this life* ; 1 Cor. xv. 19. It is for this that *we labor, and suffer, and endure* whatsoever our heavenly Father is pleased to lay upon us. It is this confirms our fortitude, and makes *us stedfast, unmovable, always abounding in the work of the Lord, forasmuch as we know that our labor shall not be in vain in the Lord* ; 1 Cor. xv. 58. It is this that enables us to bear the loss of our dearest friends with patience and hope, and assuages the smart of our sharpest arrows : For since *we believe that Jesus died and rose again*, so we rejoice in hope, that *they which sleep in Jesus shall be brought with him at his return*, and shall appear in brighter and more glorious circumstances than ever our eyes were blessed with here on earth ; 1 Thess. iv. 13, 14. This teaches us to triumph over death and the grave in divine language—*O death, where is thy sting ? O grave, where is thy victory ?* 1 Cor. xv. 55.

Reflection. "What are thy chief burdens, O my soul ? Whence are all thy sighs and thy daily groanings ? What are thy distresses of flesh or spirit ? Summon them all in one view, and see whether there be not power and glory enough in the resurrection to conquer and silence them all, and put thy present sorrows to flight ? Dost thou dwell in a vexing and persecuting world, amongst oppressions and reproaches ? But those who reproach and oppress are but mortal creatures, who shall shortly go down to the dust, and then they shall tyrannize and afflict thee no more : The great rising-day shall change the scene from oppression and reproach to dominion and glory. When *they lie down in the grave like beasts of slaughter, death shall feed on them, and the upright shall have dominion over them in the morning, when God shall redeem thy soul*

*from the power of the grave ; Psalm xlix. 14, 15. Thy God shall hide thy body from their rage in his own appointed resting-place, and he shall receive thy soul, and keep it secure in his own presence, till that blessed morning break upon this lower creation : then shalt thou arise and shine, for the glory of the Lord is risen upon thee ; Isaiah lx. 1.*

“ Do the calamities which thou sufferest proceed from the hand of God ? Art thou disquieted with daily pain, with sickness and anguish in thy flesh ? Or art thou surrounded with crosses and disappointments in thy outward circumstances ? Are thy spirits sunk with many loads of care and pressing perplexities ? Canst thou not forget them all in the vision that faith can give thee of the great rising-day ? Canst thou not say in the language of faith —*The sufferings of this present time are not worthy to be compared with the glory that shall be revealed in us ; Rom. viii. 18.* Then the head and the heart shall ache no more, and every circumstance around thee shall be pleasing and joyful for ever.

“ Or art thou tenderly affected with the loss of pious friends, who have been very dear and desirable ? Perhaps thy sensibilities here are too great and painful : They are such indeed as nature is ready to indulge, but are they not more than God requires, or the gospel allows ? Do not thy thoughts dwell too much on the gloom and darkness of the grave ? O think of that bright hour, when every saint shall rise from the dark retreats of death with more complete characters of beauty, holiness, and pleasure, than ever this world could shew them in ! They are not perished, but sent a little before us into God’s hiding-place, where though they lie in dust and darkness, yet they are safe from the dangers and vexations of life ; but they shall spring up in the happy moment into immortality, and shall join with thee in a mutual surprise at each other’s divine change.

“ Or dost thou feel the corruptions of thy heart working within thee, and the sins of thy nature restless in their endeavors to bring defilement upon thy soul, and guilt upon thy conscience : Go on and maintain the holy warfare against all these rising iniquities. This thy warfare shall not continue long : Thou shalt find every one of these sins buried with thee in the grave, but they shall arise to assault thee no more. The saint shall leave every sin behind him when he breaks out of the dust at the summons of Christ, and thou shalt find no seeds of iniquity in thy body when it is raised from the grave. Holiness to the Lord shall be inscribed upon all thy powers for ever.

“ Or art thou perplexed, O my soul, at the near prospect of

death, and all the terrors and dismal appearances that surround it ? Art thou afraid to lie down in the cold and noisome grave ? Does thy nature shudder at it as a gloomy place of horror ? These indeed are the prejudices of sense ; but the language of faith will tell thee, it is only God's hiding-place, where he secures his saints till all the ages of sin and sorrow are overpassed. Look forward to the glorious morning when thou shalt rise from the dust among ten thousand of thy fellows, every one in the image of the Son of God, with their bodies formed *after the likeness of his glorious body* ; Phil. iii. 21. and rejoicing together with divine satisfaction in the pleasure of this heavenly change. Try whether the meditation of these glories, and the distant prospect of this illustrious day, will not scatter all the gloom that hovers round the grave, and vanquish the fiercest appearance of the king of terrors. What is there, O my soul, among all the miseries thou hast felt, or all that thou fearest, that can sink thy courage, if the faith of a resurrection be but alive and wakeful ?" But this leads me to the

V. "The saints of God, who are resting in their beds of dust, will arise joyfully at the call of their heavenly Father." *Thou shalt call, and I will answer thee*, said holy Job. The command of God creates life, and gives power to the dead to arise and speak. "I come, O Lord, I come." When Jesus, the Son of God, as with the trumpet of an archangel, shall pronounce the word which he spake to Lazarus, *Arise, and come forth*, John xi. 43. dust and rottenness shall hear the call from heaven, and the clods of corruption all round the earth shall rise into the form of man : The saints shall appear at once and answer to that divine call, arrayed in a glory like that of angels ; an illustrious host of martyrs and confessors for the truth ; an army of heroes and valiant sufferers for the name and cause of God and his Son ; an innumerable multitude of faithful servants, who have finished their work, and lay down at rest.

How shall Adam, the father of our race, together with the holy men of his day, be surprised, when they shall awake out of their long sleep of five thousand years ? How shall all the saints of the intermediate ages break from their bed of darkness with intense delight ? And those who lay down but yesterday in the dust, shall start up at once with their early ancestors, and answer to the call of Jesus from one end of time to the other, and from all the ends of the earth. They shall rise together to *meet the Lord in the air, that they may be for ever with the Lord* ; 1 Thess. iv. 17. Never was any voice obeyed with more readiness and joy, than the voice or trumpet of the great archangel, summoning all the children of God to awake from their long slumbers, and to leave their dusty

beds behind them, with all the seeds of sin and sorrow, which are buried and lost there for ever. Never did any army on earth march with more speed and pleasure, at the sound of the trumpet, to attend their general to a new triumph, than this glorious assembly shall arise to meet their returning Lord, when this last trumpet sounds, when he shall *come the second time* in the full glories of his person and his offices, as Lord and Judge of the world, to bring his faithful followers into complete salvation.

Reflection. "Whosoever, O my soul, thou feelest any reluctance to obey the summons of death, encourage thy faith, and scatter thy fears, by waiting for the call of God to a blessed resurrection. Jesus himself lay down in the grave at his Father's command, and he arose with joy at the appointed hour as the head of the new creation, *as the first-born from the dead*; and he has orders given him by the Father to summon every saint from their graves at the long-appointed hour. Because Jesus arose, and lives, they shall arise and live also. O may my flesh lie down in the dust with all courage and composure, and rejoice to escape into a place of rest and silence, far away from the noise and tumult, the hurry and bustle of this present life; being well assured, that the next sound which shall be heard is the voice of the Son of God, *arise, ye dead!* Make haste then, O blessed Jesus, and finish thy divine work here on earth: I lay down my head to sleep in the dust, waiting for thy call to awake in the morning."

VI. "God takes delight in his works of nature, but much more when they are dignified and adorned by the operations of divine grace." *Thou wilt have a desire*, saith the good man in my text, *to the work of thy own hands*. Thou hast moulded me and fashioned me at first by thy power, thou hast new created me by thy Spirit, and though thou hidest me for a season in one of thy secret chambers of death, thou wilt raise me again to light and life, *and in my flesh shall I see God*.

When the Almighty had created this visible world, he surveyed his works on the seventh day, and pronounced them all good, and he took delight in them all before sin entered and defiled them: And when he has delivered the creatures of his power from the bondage of corruption, and has purged our souls and our bodies from sin and from every evil principle, he will again delight in the sons and daughters of Adam, whom he has thus cleansed and refined by his sovereign grace, and has qualified and adorned them for his own presence. *He will sing and rejoice over them, and rest in his love*; Zep. iii. 17. He will love to see them with his Son Jesus at their head, diffusing holiness and glory through all his

members. Jesus the Redeemer will love to see them round him, for he has bought them with his blood, and they are a treasure too precious to be for ever lost. He will rejoice to behold them rising at his call into a splendor like his own, *and they shall be satisfied when they awake from death into his likeness*; Psalm xvii. 15. and appear in the image of *his own glorious body*, fit heirs for the inheritance of heaven, fit companions for the blessed angels of light, and prepared to dwell for ever with himself.

Reflection. And shall not we who are the *work of his hands*, have a desire to him that made us? To him that redeemed us? To him that has new created and moulded us into his own likeness? Do we not long to see him? Have we no desire to be with him, even though we should *be absent from the body* for a season? But much more should we delight to think of being *present with the Lord*, when our whole natures, body and soul, shall appear as the new workmanship of almighty power; our souls new created in the image of God, and our bodies new born from the dead into a life of immortality; 2 Cor. v. 8.

VII. The last observation is of a very general nature, and spreads itself through all my text, and that is, "How much are we indebted to God for the revelation of the New Testament, which teaches us to find out the blessings which are contained in the Old, and to fetch out the glories and treasures which are concealed there?" The writers of the gospel have not only pointed us to the rich mines where these treasures lie, but have brought forth many of the jewels and set them before us. *It is this gospel that brings life and immortality to light by Jesus Christ*; 2 Tim. i. 10. It is this gospel that scatters the gloom and darkness which was spread over the face of the grave, and illuminates all the chambers of death. Who could have found out the doctrine of the resurrection, contained in that word of grace given to Abraham, I am thy God, if Jesus, the great prophet, had not taught us to explain it thus; Matt. xxii. 31. *God is not the God of the dead, but of the living.*

We who have the happiness to live in the days of the Messiah, know more than all the ancient prophets were acquainted with, and understand the word of their prophecies better than they themselves: for they *searched what or what manner of time the Spirit of Christ, which was in them, did signify, when it testified beforehand the sufferings of Christ, and the glory which should follow*; 1 Pet. i. 11. But we read all this fairly written in the gospel. Do you think that good David could have explained some of his own Psalms into so divine a sense, or Isaiah given such a bright account of his own words of prophecy, as St. Paul has done in several

places of the New Testament, where he cites and unfolds them ? Could those illustrious ancients have given us such *abundant consolation and hope through the Scriptures*, which they themselves wrote aforetime, as this apostle has done ? *Rom. xv. 4.* Do you think Job could have read such a lecture on his own expressions in this text, or in that bright prophecy in the xix. chapter, as the very meanest among the ministers of the gospel can do by the help of the New Testament ? For in point of clear discoveries of divine truths and graces, *the least in the kingdom of the Messiah is greater than John the Baptist and all the prophets*; and our blessed Jesus has told us so, *Matt. xi. 11, 13.* And by the aid and influences of his Spirit we may be taught yet farther to search into these hidden mines of grace, and bring forth new treasures of glory.

Reflection. “Awake, O my soul, and bless the Lord with all thy powers, and give thanks with holy joy for the gospel of his Son Jesus. It is Jesus, by his rising from the dead, has left a divine light upon the gates of the grave, and scattered much of the darkness that surrounded it. It is the gospel of Christ which casts a glory even upon the bed of death, and spreads a brightness upon the graves of the saints in the lively views of a great rising-day. O blessed and surprising prospect of faith ! O illustrious scenes of future vision and transport ! When the Son of God shall bring forth to public view all his redeemed ones, who had been long hidden in night and dust, and shall present them all to God the Father in his own image, bright, and holy, and unblemished, in the midst of all the splendors of the resurrection ! O blessed and joyful voice, when he shall say with divine pleasure, *Here am I, and the children which thou hast given me* ; *Isaiah viii. 18. Heb. ii. 13.* We have both passed through the grave, and I have made them all conquerors of death, and vested them with immortality, according to thy divine commission ! *Thine they were, O Father, and thou hast given them into my hands*, and behold I have brought them all safe to thy appointed mansions, and I present them before thee *without spot or blemish* ; *John xvii. 6.*”

And many a parent of a pious household in that day, when they shall see their sons and their daughters around them, all arrayed with the beams of the Sun of righteousness, shall echo with holy joy to the voice of the blessed Jesus, “*Lord, here am I, and the children which thou hast given me* ; *Heb. ii. 13.* I was afraid, as Job once might be when his friends suggested this fear ; I was afraid that my *children had sinned against God, and he had cast them away for their transgression* ; *Job viii. 4.* But I am now convinced, when he seized them from my sight, he only took them out of the way of

temptation and danger, and concealed them for a season in his safe hiding-place : I mourned in the daytime for a lost son or a lost daughter, and in the night my couch was bedewed with my tears : I was scared with midnight dreams on their account, and the visions of the grave terrified me, because my children were there : I gave up myself to sorrow, for fear of the displeasure of my God both against them and against me : But how unreasonable were these sorrows ! How groundless were my fears ! How gloriously am I disappointed this blessed morning ! I see my dear offspring called out of that long retreat where God had concealed them, and they arise to meet the divine call. I hear them answering with joy to the happy summons. My eyes behold them risen in the image of my God and their God ; they are near me, they stand with me at the right hand of the Judge ; now shall we rejoice together in the sentence of eternal blessedness from the lips of my Lord, my Redeemer and their Redeemer.” *Amen.*

## SERMON V.

### THE DEATH OF KINDRED IMPROVED.

"Whether life or death—all are yours."—1 COR. iii. 22.

HAPPY and immortal had Adam been, and all his children, if he had not ventured to break the command of his Creator: Life had been theirs in the most glorious sense of it; and death had not been known. But when sin entered into the world, death followed close behind it, according to that just and solemn threatening, *In the day thou eatest, thou shalt surely die*; Gen. ii. 17. And what a dismal havoc has this enemy made amongst the inhabitants of our world! It has strewed the earth with carcases, and turned millions of human bodies into dust and corruption. The very name of death spreads a terror through all nature; But as dreadful and formidable as it is in itself, the grace of Christ makes a blessing of it, and sanctifies it to the advantage of his own people.

In the former discourse on this subject, we have learned some divine lessons from death, in its widest extent of dominion.\* The death of all mankind yields some special advantage to a saint: He is taught to reap some benefit from the death of impenitent sinners, though it carry along with it such a fearful train of attendants, and draw after it a long eternity of torments. He knows how to derive some advantage from the death of his fellow-Christians; and whether they die in the joy of faith, and serenity of spirit, or whether their sun sets in a cloud, and fears and doubts attend them in that important hour, still he is taught to profit by it. In these three instances it appears that death is ours; death is, in this respect, made the treasure and property of a Christian, as he is instructed to improve it, to his own sacred interest, and to the welfare of his soul. We proceed now to the

Fourth general head, and shall endeavor to shew how the death of our relations and kindred in the flesh shall turn to our benefit.

\* The discourse here alluded to, founded on the same text, is entitled, *Death improved to our advantage*. The present sermon is full of consolation for bereaved Christians; and to such, especially, it is earnestly commended.—ED

I. It shews us the emptiness and insufficiency of our dearest created comforts, of all blessings that are not immortal.

We have lost, perhaps, an inferior relation, a son, a daughter, a nephew, a pleasing entertainment and comfort of life: But death tells us, it was a poor dying comfort, a pretty piece of brittle clay, broken and dissolved, and moulderling to the dust. Our love and our grief, it may be join together, to recal the past days of fondness and delight, short-lived delight and empty vain fondness, that ends in tears and long mourning! We have lost a superior relation, or perhaps an equal, a father, a wife, a husband, or a brother: We have lost a guide, a support, a helper, a dear affectionate friend, entirely loving, and entirely beloved.

He was a kind and skilful guide, but death teaches us the insufficiency of his guidance, who left us in the midway, and lets us travel through all the remaining part of this dark wilderness alone. He has given us sweet counsel and direction in days past, but he can now direct us no more, we can consult him no more: Those lips of advice, on which we hung, are closed and silent in death: That voice will be heard no more: We must walk without this counsellor all the rest of our way, be it never so long, and never so dangerous.

He was our helper and our support under daily difficulties; but it was a weak support, that could not stand himself, when death shook him: A poor helper, and a sorry defence, that could not resist the powers of disease and mortality, nor defend himself from the assaults of death.

He was a friend and a faithful one too; but it was a feeble, a failing friend, even in the midst of his love and faithfulness; for he was called away, and constrained to depart from us in a dark and sorrowful minute, and hath left us to mourn alone. He could not abide with us a moment beyond his summons; he forsook us while we were drowned in grief, and could give us no more consolation. *Our fathers, where are they? Our prophets, our instructors, our guides, and helpers, are gone down to the land of silence, they lie asleep in the dust and darkness;* *Zech. i. 5.*

Thus death is made of advantage to us, even when it strikes us in so tender a part: For it teaches us this sacred lesson, how vain and empty are all our hopes in creatures! The dart of death is like a pen of iron in his hand, and he writes emptiness and vanity on every friend, on every relative that he takes from our family, from our side, from our bosom: He writes it in deep and painful characters, and holds our souls to the solemn lesson. The same truth stands written in many a part of the book of God, in divine

and golden letters : but perhaps we would never have learned it, had not death copied it out for us in letters of blood.

II. The death of our kindred drives us to a more immediate and constant dependance on God. When the stream is cut off, what should we do but run to the fountain ? If the stars vanish, we seek the sunbeams. And O may the sun arise, and shine upon our souls with growing light and comfort as the stars disappear !

While our friends or kindred were alive, we made them our refuge in every distress ; we have trusted in them perhaps too much ; we have lived too much upon them, with the neglect of God. A parent, a brother, or perhaps a dearer relative ; these were our high tower, our defence, our sun, and our shield : These assumed that station in our hearts, and that high place in our esteem, which is due to God only. But when this tower is battered down to dust, when the shield of clay is broken to pieces, and this dim and feeble sun is turned into darkness, then we make God alone our sun, our shield, and our high tower of defence. Then we search out earnestly what kind and condescending characters and relations God has assumed in his word ; and we read and survey the gracious titles of our Lord Jesus Christ, with new and unknown delight.

Have any of you lost your earthly parents ? Then you read with pleasure these words of the Psalmist, *If my father or my mother forsake me*, as they must do at the hour of death, then the Lord will take me up ; *Psalm xxvii. 10.* And you rejoice in that glorious promise, *Be ye separate from idols*, saith the Lord ; that is, separate yourselves from the sinful practices of the world, *and I will receive you, and I will be a father to you, and ye shall be my sons and my daughters*, saith the Lord Almighty ; *2 Cor. vi. 17, 18.* Has death entered into a family, and taken the head, the husband away ? The words of Isaiah grow sweeter than ever. *Isaiah liv. 5. Thy Maker is thy husband, the Lord of hosts is his name, even the God of the whole earth.* Are the widows and the fatherless children in danger of oppression, because they have lost their defender ? They run to the *lxviii. Psalm*, and live upon the 5th verse of it ; *A Father of the fatherless, and a Judge of the widows, is God in his holy habitation.* Is a brother summoned away by the stroke of death ? But the Lord Jesus is alive still : He that took flesh and blood upon him, that he might be made like the rest of the children of God : *He is not ashamed to call them brethren* ; *Heb. ii. 11.* This is a brother that was born for the day of our adversity ; this is the friend that sticks closer than

*a brother*, and abides with us when a brother departs, according to the expression of the wise man ; *Proverbs xvii. 17.* and *xviii. 24.* Thus the names, and characters, and relations of God the Father, and of our Lord Jesus Christ, acquire a new sweetness, and appear with greater love and glory in them, at the death of our earthly relatives.

There is many a Christian can speak feelingly, and say, “ Never did I live so much upon my God ; I never knew nor loved my Saviour so well, never conversed so much with his word, never did I find such sweetness in his names, nor his promises, nor such pleasure in secret converse with him, as I have done since the day I lost such a friend, or such a dear relation by the stroke of death : I have learned now to put no trust in creatures ; *for their breath goeth forth, and that very day their thoughts of kindness perish* ; *Psalm cxlvii. 3-8.* Now refuge fails me, no man seems to be concerned for me, since the death of such a friend ; *I say*, therefore, *to my God, thou art my refuge* ; *Psalm cxliii. 4, 5.*

III. The death of our dearest friends calls us to a noble trial of our love to God, and our submission to his sovereignty. Human nature indeed is afraid of trials ; but when the present aids of divine grace give us the victory, then *blessed is the man that endureth temptation* ; *for when he is tried, he shall receive the crown of life, which the Lord hath promised to them that love him* ; *James i. 12.* And upon this account, he exhorts Christians in the second verse, to a very sublime and difficult practice, *My brethren, count it all joy when ye fall into divers temptations, knowing this, that the trial of your faith worketh patience*, and if it endures the trial, *it will be found unto praise, and honor, and glory, at the appearing of Jesus Christ* ; *1 Pet. i. 7.*

When God sends his messenger of death, and takes a dear and beloved creature from our arms, or our bosom, the divine question is like that of our Lord to Peter, *Simon, lovest thou me?* *John xxi. 15-17.* “ Christian, *lovest thou me more than thou lovest this creature?* Art thou willing to resign this comfort at my call ? Hast thou not given thyself to me, and does thy heart refuse to give up thy son, thy brother, or thy dearest friend ? Hast thou not called me thy sovereign ? I am come now to enquire into thy sincerity. Dost thou resign thy most beloved objects to my disposal ? I gave up my Son to death for you ; and have you any thing so dear to you as my Son was to me ? What says your heart in answer to these solemn questions ? Do you love me above all things or no ? Is your will bowed down to my foot ? Can you

now repeat from your very souls the same language in which you have often addressed me in your closets, and in my sanctuary, "I am thine, Lord, I am thine; all that I have is thine?" Or do you murmur and quarrel at my providence, when I send my servant death to your house, to try whether these professions of yours were sincere or no?

Happy the Christian that comes off with honor in this hour of trial, and who can say, Heartily, Lord, I resign what thou demandest, and am angry with myself that I should find so much reluctance in my heart to surrender any thing at the call of God! What a shining evidence of our sincerity is obtained at such a season! What a noble proof of our supreme love to God! And it shall be recorded in heaven for our honor, and produced in the day of the Lord Jesus!

There is nothing in all the history of Abraham, the father of the faithful, that gives him a more shining character on earth, or perhaps in heaven, than that he gave up his son Isaac, at the command of God, and *took the wood, and the fire, and the knife in his hand*, and devoted his beloved, his only son to death; though it was in a way so terribly painful and so shocking to nature, that he himself must be the executioner. He had offered the precious sacrifice already in his heart, when the angel of the Lord came down and stopped his hand: Now I know that thou fearest God, and I know that thou lovest him too; seeing thou hast not withheld thy son, thy only son from me; *Genesis xxii. 9-12.*

Thus the death of the dearest relation turns greatly to our advantage, when it gives us so bright an evidence of our own graces, and assures us that we are hearty lovers of God.

IV. The death of a beloved relative has often wrought for the good of a saint, when the long and painful sorrow which has attended it, has shewn us how dangerous a thing it was to love a creature too well.

"O! what a wound do I feel at my heart, says a Christian, since the death of so near a relation: It pains me all the day: It fills my eyes with tears, and forbids my rest in the night: I am so troubled that I cannot sleep: It unfits me for the present duties of life, and hangs too heavy upon me, in the midst of the duties of religion. Surely that creature dwelt too near my heart, and was joined in too close a union, since my heart bleeds and smarts so long after the parting stroke. Let me watch my affections for time to come, and set a guard upon my love, that it never, never tie my soul so fast to a creature again. Come down, blessed Saviour, and take faster hold of my heart; let thy own hand heal the wound

that death has made, and let thy mercy pardon the guilt of my excessive creature-love: Dwell thou in my soul, my Lord and my God, and fill up all the unhappy and painful vacancy: Keep my affections for ever true to thee, and let my love to thee be supreme and unrivalled; nor let the softer passions of my nature wander and lose themselves amongst creatures again, lest they contract new guilt; lest they provoke thee to repeat the same smarting tragedy, and to renew these scenes of mourning."

V. The death of our kindred is for our advantage, when it awakens us to review our own conduct toward them, whether we have behaved aright or no, and when it quickens our duty to surviving relatives.

While they are alive, and present with us, our neglect of duty toward them does not so soon strike our consciences; but when the stroke of death divides them from us in this world for ever, we are ready then to bethink ourselves, whether our carriage toward them has been just and kind: And if our enquiry finds out our guilt, our hearts are tender at that season, and we soon yield to the conviction. "Did I pay that duty to a father which he well deserved, and which God required? Did I treat a mother with that filial affection and submissive tenderness that became a child? Did I pay that just deference and honor to the counsels and advice of my parents as I should have done? Did I treat my sisters with that decent affection and respect that became me: And did I exercise brotherly love toward all my equal relatives? Or has my conduct been undutiful, unkind, and unbecoming?"

And especially if we have this to charge ourselves with, that we took no care for the welfare of the souls of those that are dead. Such thoughts as these will hang heavy about the heart, and press hard upon the conscience in that day. "Did I not see my child or my brother walk in the ways of sin: and yet did I ever give him a hint of his dreadful danger? Did I fear that he was a stranger to the grace of God, and yet did I not neglect to invite him to receive the gospel? Had I not reason to question whether he was a sincere convert or no? But how little have I done toward his conversion!"

"Or if he was ever concerned about the affairs of his soul, and awakened and thoughtful about death and hell, did I direct him in the way of peace? Did I endeavor to lead him to Jesus the Saviour? Or did I let him go on without instruction, and without comfort, till death laid its cold hands upon him, and he plunged into the eternal world at a mournful uncertainty? O my heart, my heart! The anguish of it pains me beyond what I am able to

bear. O that I could recal my brother or my son from the grave ! How would I follow him with counsels and entreaties, and neither give him nor myself any rest, till I had good hope, through grace, that he had fled for refuge to lay hold on Christ and his salvation. I would never be at ease, nor would I cease pleading for him at the throne of grace, till I had found some evidences of a new nature in him, and a change of heart from sin to repentance and holiness.

"Or suppose my departed relative was a true Christian, what did I do toward the increase of his faith ? Did I ever allure him to holy conversation ? Did I take occasion now and then to introduce religious discourse ? Did I converse with him ever about the matters of our common salvation, that, as iron sharpens iron, so we might have quickened each other's zeal and love, and helped each other onward in our way to heaven.

"Surely I have found myself too guilty in some of these instances. Forgive my criminal negligence, O my God, and through thy grace I will apply myself to double diligence, with regard to my relatives that yet survive : I will enquire, as far as it is proper, into the state of their souls : I will seek the most powerful and the kindest methods to awaken the thoughtless sinners amongst them ; and I will study, and pray, and ask God what I shall say to make a deep impression upon their hearts : And though I have no office in the church, yet what I have learned there, I will talk over at home : I will preach Christ crucified, and all his gospel to them, as God shall give me proper opportunity. I will converse more freely with my pious kindred about the things of God, and learn their inward sentiments of religion and experimental godliness. Thus will I bring holy discourse into the parlor and the chamber ; and every soul in my house shall be a witness of my endeavors to promote the eternal welfare of those that are near me."

Now when the death of a near relation attains such an end as this, and raises our repentance and holy zeal at this rate, we cannot doubt but that we receive sensible advantage by it.

VI. The death of our friends, who were truly religious, inclines us to review their instructions and their virtues, and sets them before our eyes, in a fresh and lively manner, to influence our own practice.

We are too ready to forget their advice while they are living and daily present with us, and we take too little notice of those virtues in which they were eminent. We beheld their humility toward God and men, their condescension to their inferiors, their love and hearty friendship to their equals, and their sweetness of temper toward all around them. We beheld it and perhaps we loved and

honored them for it; but we took but little pains to copy after them. We saw their pity to the poor and the miserable, their charity to persons of different sects and sentiments in religion: their readiness to forgive those that offended them, and their good-will and obliging carriage, to all men. There was a beauty and loveliness in this conduct, that rendered them amiable indeed; but how little have we transcribed of their example, either into our hearts or our lives! We observed their constant tenderness of conscience, their devotion toward God, and their zeal for the honor of Christ, and his gospel in the world. O that we had made these graces the matter of our imitation! What can we do now more to honor their memory, than to speak, and live, and act like them?

It may be we have got their pictures drawn by some skilful hand, and their images hang round us in their best likenesses, as tender memorials of what we once enjoyed, to give us now and then a melancholy delight, and awaken in us the pleasing sadness of love. These we call our most precious pieces of furniture, and our hearts rate them at an uncommon price. But it would be much richer furniture for our souls to have the best likeness of our pious predecessors and kindred copied out there. Let us now and then reflect what were their peculiar virtues, and the remarkable graces that adorned them; and if we could imagine the spirit of each of them to look down upon us, through those eyes which the pencil has so well imitated, and to speak through those lips, each of them would say, in the language of the softest and most sacred affection, *Be ye followers of me as dear children, so far as I was a follower of Christ.*

And this thought I would more especially impress on those who were most unhappily negligent of the pious counsel of their ancestors, or ran counter to their holy advice and example in their lifetime. "I was too regardless, may a young Christian say, of the wise and weighty sayings of my father deceased, they return now upon my thoughts, with a fresh and living influence. I have been too ready to neglect what a kind mother taught me; but the instructions that I received from her dying lips, had such an air of solemnity and tenderness in them, that they have made a deep impression upon my heart; and I hope I shall never forget them. The prudent and pious rules that my elder relations have often set before me, recur to my thoughts with double efficacy since their death; I shall hear them speak no more, I shall see their holy examples no more; I will gather up the fragments of their religious counsels, and make them the rule of my conduct; I am well assured their souls are happy, and by the grace of God I will tread

in their steps, till I arrive at those blessed regions, where I hope to meet them."

This thought leads me on to the last instance of benefit which we derive from the death of our kindred in the flesh.

VII. The death of dear and near relations calls our thoughts in a more powerful and sensible manner, to converse with the grave and eternity.

When our neighbors, or our common acquaintance die, we attend the funeral, and cast an eye into the grave; we spend a thought or two on the pit of corruption, and the mouldering dust: We awaken a meditation or two on things heavenly and the world to come; and we return quickly, and busily to this world again: But when God sends death into our chambers, and it makes a slaughter there, it awakens us more effectually from a drowsy frame, and it nails our thoughts down to our most important and everlasting concerns. "Part of me is gone to the dust already, it is not long ere the surviving part shall go also. Death has smitten the desire of my eyes, and the partner of my joys, it will strike me ere long, and am I ready?" This thought dwells upon the heart of a true Christian at such a season, and while the Spirit of God assists the work, it is not in the power of all the trifles on this earth to banish the holy thought, and carnalize the mind again. As when a man is seized with the dead palsy, or has a limb cut off, and buried in the dust, how sensibly does this awaken in him the thought of death and futurity! "The sentence of death is begun to be executed on me already, and the whole execution will be quickly fulfilled; it is time now to be ready, for death is in good earnest, and has begun his work."

And if our departed relative were a Christian indeed, and gave us comfortable hope in his death, then it leads our thoughts naturally to heaven, and most powerfully touches the springs of our heavenly hopes. It raises our pious wishes to the upper world, and we say, as Thomas did at the death of Lazarus, *Let us go, that we may die with him*; John xi. 16. Let us go to our God and our holy kindred, and enjoy their better presence there. Let us not sorrow for the dead as those that mourn without hope; 1 Thess. iv. 13. but look upward to things unseen, and forward to the great rising-day, and rejoice in the promised and future glories that are beyond life and time.

Every dear relative that dies and leaves us, gives us one motive more to be willing to die: Their death furnishes us with one new allurement toward heaven, and breaks off one of the fetters and bonds that tied us down to this earth. Alas! we are tied too fast

to these earthly tabernacles, these prisons of flesh and blood. We are attached too much to flesh and blood still, though we find them such painful and such sinful companions. We love to tarry in this world too well, though we meet with so many weaning strokes to divide our hearts from it. O it is good to live more at a loose from earth, that we may be ready for the parting hour: Let us not be angry with the sovereign hand of God that breaks one bond after another; though the strokes be painful, yet they loosen our spirits from this cottage of clay; they teach us to practice a flight heavenward in holy meditations and devout breathings; and we learn to say, *How long, O Lord, how long?*

The Recollection.—“Have any of us lately felt such parting strokes as these? Have we lost any of our beloved kindred? God calls upon us now, and enquires, ‘What have you learned of these divine lessons?’ I would ask myself this day, Have I seen the emptiness and the insufficiency of creatures, and recalled my hope and confidence from every thing beneath and beside God? Have I passed through this solemn hour of trial well, and shewn my supreme love to God, and my most entire submission to his sovereignty, by resigning so dear a comfort at his demand? Have I been taught by the inward pain which I felt at parting, and by the smart which still remains, how dangerous a thing it is to love a creature too well? Have I duly considered my past conduct toward my relations deceased, and does it approve itself to my conscience at the review? Or have I found matter for self-condemnation and repentance? Have I treasured up the memory of their virtues in my heart, and set them before me as the copy of my life? Have my thoughts followed the soul of my dear departed friend, and traced it with pleasure to the world of blessed spirits; and does my own soul seem to fix its hope and joy there, and to dwell there above? Are my thoughts become more spiritual and heavenly; Do I live more as a borderer on the other world, since a piece of me is gone thither? And am I ready for the summons, if it should come before to-morrow?”

“Happy Christian, who has been taught by the Spirit of grace to improve the death of the dearest relative to so divine an advantage. The words of my text are then fulfilled experimentally in you: *Death is yours*: Death itself is made a part of your treasures. The parting stroke is painful indeed, but it carries a blessing in it too; for it has promoted your heavenly and eternal interest.” Amen.

## SERMON VI.

### DEATH A BLESSING TO THE SAINTS.

"Whether life or death—all are yours."—1 COR. iii. 22.

WE have already seen many divine comforts, and a rich variety of blessings, derived from the formidable name of DEATH: One would scarce have thought that a word of so much terror should have ever been capable of yielding so much sweetness; but the gospel of Christ is a spring of wonders: It has consecrated all the terrible things in nature, even death itself, and every thing beside sin, to the benefit of the saint.

Death, in all its appearances, may furnish the mind of a believer with some sacred lesson of truth or holiness. When it appears in the extent of its dominion, and bringing all mankind down to the dust; when it lays hold on an impenitent sinner, and fills his flesh and soul with agonies; when it assaults a saint, and is conquered by faith; when it makes a wide ravage among our acquaintance, when it enters into our families, and takes away our near and dear relatives from the midst of us, still the Christian may reap some divine advantage by it.

But can our own death be ever turned into a blessing too? Nature thinks it hard to learn such a strange lesson as this, and has much ado to be persuaded to believe it. How dismal are its attendants to flesh and blood! What languishings of the body! What painful agonies! What tremblings and convulsions in nature frequently attend the dying hour even of the best of Christians! Can that be a blessing which turns this active and beautiful engine of the body into loathsome clay; which closes these eyes in long darkness, and deprives us of every sense? Can death become a blessing to us, which cuts us off from all converse with the sun and moon, and that rich variety of sensible objects which furnish out such delightful scenes all around us, and entertain the whole animal creation? Can that be a blessing which divides asunder those two intimate friends, the *flesh and the spirit*, that sends one of them to the noisome prison of the grave, and hurries away the other into unknown regions? Yes, the gospel of Christ has power

and grace enough in it to take off all these gloomy appearances from death, and to illuminate the darkest side of it with various lustre. So the sun paints the fairest colors upon the blackest cloud, and while the thick dark shower is descending, it entertains our eyes with all the beauties of the rainbow ; a most glorious type and seal of the covenant of grace, that can give a pleasing aspect to death itself, and spread light and pleasure over the darksome grave.

If we are believers in Christ, *death* is ours as well as *life*. These two contrary states may each of them derive peculiar benefits from the new covenant. The Christian may be taught so to value and improve life, that he may be not only patient, but cheerful and thankful in the continuance of it. This has been made evident in a large discourse already : And yet it must be confessed, that the advantages which death brings to a believer are still greater and more glorious, and this will appear in the following particulars :

I. Death finishes our state of labor and trial, and puts us in possession of the crown and the prize. St. Paul was appointed to die by the sword of Nero, and to end his labors and his race in blood ; yet he rejoices to think that his race was just at an end, and triumphs in view of the glorious recompense ; 2 Tim. iv. 7, 8. *I have fought the good fight, I have finished my course, I have kept the faith ; henceforth is laid up for me a crown of righteousness.* There is a voice from heaven that proclaims the dead happy ; upon this account, that their toil and fatigue is come to an end. Rev. xiv. 13. *Blessed are the dead that die in the Lord, for they rest from their labors, and their works follow them ;* that is, the prize of everlasting happiness which Christ has promised to his laboring saints Rev. ii. 10. *Be thou faithful unto death, and I will give thee a crown of life.* So the weary traveller counts the last hour of the day the best ; for it finishes the fatigue and toil of the day, and brings him to his resting-place. So the soldier rejoices in the last field of battle ; he fights with the prize of glory in his eye, and ends the war with courage, pleasure, and victory.

II. Death frees us for ever from all our errors and mistakes, and brings us into a world of glorious knowledge and illumination. The vale of death is a dark passage indeed, but it leads into the regions of perfect light. *Now we know but in part,* says the apostle ; 1 Cor. xiii. 12. *Now we see but through a glass darkly, then we shall see God and our Saviour face to face, and know them even as we are known ;* not in the same degree of perfection indeed, but according to our measure and capacity, we shall know them, in a way of vision, or immediate sight, as God knows his creatures, as

one man knows his friend, whose face he beholds with his eyes; or as one spirit knows another, by some unknown ways of perception which belong to spirits.

O what a new and unspeakable pleasure will it be to the disciples of Christ, and the ministers of the gospel, that have been tired and worn out in tedious controversies in this world, and sorely perplexed amongst the difficult passages of Scripture, when they shall arrive at that region of light and glory, where the darknesses of the mind shall be all scattered, the veil shall be taken off from sacred things, and doubts and difficulties shall vanish for ever!

Alas! What desolation and mischief has the noise and clamor of controversy brought on the church of Christ in all ages? What quarrels and sharp contests has it raised among fellow-Christians, and especially, where zeal and ignorance have joined together, and brought fire and darkness into the sanctuary! This has banished charity and love out of the house of God, and made the spirit of God himself to depart grieved. Surely death carries a considerable blessing in it, as it delivers us from these disorders, these bitter quarrels, and appoints us a place in the temple of God on high, where the axe and the hammer never sound, where the saw of contention is never drawn, where the noise of war is heard no more, but perfect light lays a foundation for perfect and everlasting love.

III. Death makes an utter end of sin, it delivers us from a state of temptation, and conveys us into a state of perfect holiness, safety, and peace. *The spirits of the just are made perfect in holiness*; when they leave this sinful and mortal flesh, they stand without spot or blemish, without fault or infirmity of greater or lesser size, and appear pure and undefiled before the throne of God; *Rev. xiv. 5.* *Their robes are washed and made white in the blood of the Lamb, and they serve him without sin, day and night, in his temple;* *Rev. vii. 14, 15.* When death carries them away from this world, it carries them out of the territories of the devil; for he has no power in that land whither happy souls go: And all the remaining lusts of the flesh, that had their death's wound given them by renewing grace, are now destroyed for ever; for the death of the body is the final death of sin, and the grave is, as it were, the burying-place of many unruly iniquities, that have too often defiled and disquieted the spirit.

And as the corrupt affections which are mingled with our flesh and blood, and which are rooted deep in animal nature, are left behind us in the bed of death, so when we ascend to heaven, we shall find no manner of temptation to revive them. There is no malice or angry resentment to be awakened there, no incitements to envy, intemperance, or the cursed sin of pride, that cleaves so close to our natures

here on earth. When we are encompassed with those blessed creatures, angels and saints made perfect, we shall meet with no affront, no reproach, no injury, to provoke our anger, or kindle an uneasy passion. Most perfect friendship is ever practised there; it is a region of peace, a world of immortal amity.

Nor shall we find any temptation to envy, in that happy state; for though there are different ranks of glorified creatures, yet each is filled with a holy satisfaction, and hath an inward relish of his own felicity suited to his own capacity and state, and they have all a general relish of the common joy, and a mutual satisfaction in each other's happiness. Envy, that fretful passion, is no more. In heaven there are no provocations to those unruly appetites, which break in upon our temperance, and pollute our souls.

Pride and haughtiness of spirit have no room in that blessed world: The superior order of saints, which are nearest the throne, shall not despise the meanest; for the nearer they approach to the perfect image of Christ, the more intense and diffusive is their love. Besides, every saint in glory shall see himself in his own nothingness, and infinitely indebted to divine grace for all things: This shall for ever forbid all vanity and conceit of merit. In heaven we shall see God in the fulness of his glory, and shall have so penetrating a sense of his saving grace, that a creature rescued from hell cannot be proud there.

Rejoice then, ye poor feeble Christians, that have been long wrestling with your indwelling sins, and maintaining a holy and daily fight, with strong and restless corruptions in your nature; *Lift up your heads at the thoughts of death, for the day of your redemption draws nigh;* Luke xxi. 28. Death is your deliverer. It is like the angel that Christ sent to Peter, to knock off his fetters, and release him from the prison; it may smite and surprise you, and it has indeed a dark and unlovely aspect; but its message is light and peace, holiness and salvation.

IV. Death is ours, for it takes us away from under all the threatenings of God in his word, and places us in the actual possession of the greatest part of the blessings that God has promised us. The saints that are dead are thus described; they are *those, who through faith and patience, inherit the promises;* Heb. vi. 12.

Whilst we are in this life, there are many threatenings in the Bible, that belong to the saints as well as to sinners. I shall mention that great and general one which is annexed to the covenant of grace; *Psalm lxxxix. 30. If the children of Christ forsake my law, and walk not in my judgments; then will I visit their transgressions with a rod, and their iniquity with stripes;* but when

death has conveyed them into the presence of their heavenly Father, they shall forsake his law no more, there are no more transgressions for the rod to correct, the stripes of chastisement cease for ever; and their Father, and their God, shall be angry no more.

The best part of the promises are fulfilled when a soul arrives at heaven. The promise of the resurrection of the body yet remains unaccomplished indeed; but every separate spirit in heaven waits for it with full assurance of accomplishment. "I have found," says the holy soul, "so many rich promises of the covenant fulfilled already, and I am in the possession of so many divine blessings that God once foretold, that I am well assured that my God is faithful who has promised, and the rest shall be all fulfilled."

V. Death raises us above the mean and trifling pleasures of the present state, as well as delivers us from all present pains, and brings us into a world of perfect ease, and superior and refined delight. It divides us from the pains and pleasures that we derive from the first Adam, and sets us in the midst of superior blessings, which the second Adam has purchased for us. *We shall hunger no more, we shall thirst no more, neither shall the scorching heat of the sun light upon us*, or any painful influence from the elements of this world: *The Lamb which is in the midst of the throne shall feed us with celestial food*, suited to our purified natures, and lead us to drink full draughts of unknown pleasure, which is described by living fountains of water. We shall see God himself, the original beauty, and the spring of all delight: We shall see our Lord Jesus Christ, the most illustrious copy of the Father, *the brightness of his glory, and the express image of his person, and God himself shall wipe away all tears from our eyes*; Rev. vii. 16, 17. *Though the wages of sin is death* by the appointment of the law of God; Rom. vi. 23. yet this very death is constrained to serve the purposes of our great Redeemer; and it brings us into the possession of that *eternal life*, which is the *gift of God through Jesus Christ our Lord*.

VI. Death not only gives us possession of promised blessings, but it banishes all our fears and doubts for ever, by fixing us in a state of happiness unchangeable. They that are once entered into the temple of God on high *shall no more go out* of it; Rev. iii. 12. For they are established in the house of God, they are as pillars there, they become a part of that vast and living temple, in which God dwells for ever in all his glory.

Death is ours; for it finishes our fears, it fulfils our wishes and our hopes, and leaves us no more room to fear to all eternity. When we behold the face of God in righteousness, and awake out of this world of dreams and shadows, in the world of happy spirits with

the likeness of God upon us, we shall find sweet satisfaction ; *Psalm xvii. 15.* I *shall be satisfied when I awake with thy likeness.* Death leaves a saint, as it were, but one thing to wish or hope for, and that is the resurrection, or the accomplishment of this text in its completest sense, *viz.*, that their bodies may awake out of the grave with the likeness of Christ upon them, and be made conformable to his glorious body, in vigor, beauty, and immortality.

VII. Death is a happiness to a Christian ; for it divides him forever from the company of sinners and enemies, and places him in the society of his best friends, his God, and his Saviour, his fellow-saints, and the innumerable company of angels. O how sorely has the soul of many a saint been vexed here on earth, as the soul of Lot was in Sodom, with the conversation of the wicked ! How have they often complained of the hidings of the face of God, of the absence of Christ their Lord, and the sensible withdrawals of the influences of the blessed Spirit !

There is a great partition-wall betwixt us and the happy world, whilst we are in this life ; the veil of flesh and blood divides us from the world of spirits, and from the glorious inhabitants of it. With what surprising joy shall a poor, humble, watchful Christian, that has been teased long, and long tormented with the company of the wicked, enter into that illustrious and blessed society, when death shall break down the partition-wall, and rend the veil of flesh and blood that divided him from them, and kept him at a painful distance ! “It is better, infinitely better, shall the departed soul say, to see God without the medium of such ordinances, as I have used on earth : It is better to be absent from the body, and to be present with the Lord Jesus. It is better to ascend, and worship in the midst of the heavenly Jerusalem, and amongst that blessed assembly of the first-born, than to be joined to the purest churches on earth, or to be engaged in the noblest acts of worship, which the state of mortality admits of. Farewell sins and sinners for ever : Temptations and tempters, farewell to all eternity. And ye, my dear holy friends, beloved in the Lord, my pious relatives, my companions in faith and worship, farewell but for a short season, till you also shall be released from your present bondage and imprisonment by the messenger of death : Fear it not, for it is your Lord and my Lord, your Saviour and mine, who sends it to release you from all the evils which you have long groaned under, and to bring you to our Father’s house, where the business, the pleasures, and the company are infinitely agreeable and entertaining.”

Thus have I shewn in various instances, how the death of a believer in general is appointed to work for his good, and becomes an

advantage to him through the grace of Christ. I proceed to shew how the death of a Christian in all the particular circumstances that attend it, has something in it that may be turned to his benefit.

*Christ has the keys of death and the grave ; he was dead and is alive, and behold he lives for evermore ; Rev. i. 18.* And he knows how to manage all the circumstances of the death of his saints for their profit : He appoints the time when, the manner how, and the place where they shall die, and determines all these things by rules of unsearchable wisdom, under the influence of his faithfulness and his love.

1. The time when we shall die is appointed by Christ : If he calls us away in the days of our youth, he secures us thereby from many a temptation, and many a sin ; for our life on earth is subject to daily defilements. He prevents also many a sorrow and distress of mind, many an agony and sharp pain to which our flesh is subject, and saves us from all the languishing weaknesses of old age, and from tasting the dregs of mortality.

When our blessed Lord foresees some huge and heavy sorrows ready to fall upon us, or some mighty temptations approaching towards us, he lays his hand upon us in the midst of life, and hides us in the grave. This has been the sweet hiding-place of many a saint of God, from a day of public temptation and overspreading misery.

If he lengthens out our life to many years, we have a fair opportunity of doing much more service for our God, and our Redeemer ; and we also enjoy the longer experience of his power, his wisdom, and his faithful mercy, in guiding us through many a dark difficulty, in supporting us under many a heavy burden, and delivering our souls from many a threatening temptation. Oftentimes he sweetens the passage of his aged saints through the dark valley, with nearer and brighter views of the heavenly world : He gives them a strong and earnest expectation of glory, and some sweet foretastes of it, to bear them up under the languors of old age and sickness : The haven of rest becomes sweeter to them, when they have passed through many tedious storms : The hour of release into the world of light, is more exquisitely pleasing, after a tedious imprisonment in the flesh, and long years of darkness.

2. The manner how we shall die, is appointed also by Christ our Lord, for the benefit of his saints. If death smite us with a sudden and unexpected stroke, then we are surprised into the world of pleasure at once, and, ere we are aware, our souls find themselves in the midst of the paradise of God, surrounded with joys unspeakable. If our mortal nature decay by slow degrees, we have a pre-

cious opportunity for the more lively exercises of faith ; we may then converse with death before-hand, and daily grow in preparation for our departure. We see ourselves launching down the stream of time, and if our faith be awake and sprightly, we rejoice in the sensible and hourly approaches of heaven and eternity. We may speak many useful dying sentences for the glory of our Lord, and make happy impressions upon the souls of those we leave behind : We may invite and require, we may allure and charge our dear relatives to follow us in the same path, and to meet us before the throne.

3. Our Lord also designs our benefit, when he appoints the place of our death, whether we shall quit the body at home or abroad ; for some of us he sees it best, that our friends should stand round us and close our eyes, and, as it were, see our spirits take their flight into the invisible world, that they may assist and support us with divine words of consolation, or that they themselves may learn, and dare to die, and be animated by our example to encounter the last enemy. Our Lord sees it proper, for other of his saints to die in the midst of strangers, or, perhaps, amongst enemies, and by a violent death, that he may thereby give a glorious testimony to their faith and piety, as well as to the power of his own gospel. Whether we breathe our last at land or at sea, in our native country, or in a foreign climate, *all shall work together for the final welfare of those that love God, and are called and justified, and sanctified according to his holy purpose* ; Rom. viii. 28.

There are, doubtless, some peculiar and secret reasons, in the grand comprehensive scheme of the counsels and decrees of God, why the death of every saint is appointed at this season, and not at another; why some young buds are cropped ere they blossom on earth, and transplanted to open and unfold themselves, and shine in the garden of God on high, while others are brought home into the heavenly garner, like fruit well grown, or like a shock of corn fully ripe. There is a divine reason why some are hurried away by a violent death, and others are permitted naturally to dissolve into their dust : Why some must die on this spot of ground and others on that ; for the vast scheme of his counsels has a glorious consistency in it with the covenant of his grace ; And indeed, the covenant of grace runs through the whole scheme of divine counsels, and mingles itself with them all. We rejoice in this meditation, while we believe the truth of it. We are persuaded, that we shall know, hereafter, the various and admirable designs of divine providence and love, in all the infinite variety of the death of his saints ;

and this shall make part of our songs in the upper world, and give a joyful accent to our hallelujahs there.

Let us maintain therefore, a blessed assurance of the wise and gracious designs of our Lord, in all the circumstances of the death of his people. Let us learn to say with that aged saint, and eminent servant of Christ, the Reverend Mr. Baxter, when under many weaknesses of nature, and long and sore agonies of pain, he spake concerning his death, "Lord, when thou wilt, what thou wilt, how thou wilt." Let us insure our souls in his hands for eternity, and not be over-solicitous about the circumstances of our death, about the place, the manner, or the hour when we shall take our leave of life and time.

Having made it appear, in these several sermons, that death is ours, or shall turn to our advantage, not only when it strikes our friends or strangers, but when it seizes our own flesh also : I desire to conclude this subject of discourse with various inferences, of which some may be called doctrinal, and others practical.

The doctrinal inferences are these :

Inference I. How different is the judgment of sense, from the judgment of faith ! The eye of sense looks upon death as a sovereign and cruel tyrant, reigning over all nature and nations, and making dreadful havoc among mankind, as it were, after his own will and pleasure ; but faith beholds it as a slave subdued to the power of Christ, and constrained to act under his sovereign influence for the good of all his saints. Sense teaches us to look upon ourselves, as the possession and food of death ; but faith assures us, that death is our possession, and a part of our treasure. Death is yours, O Christians, for *all things are yours*.

When sense has the ascendant over us, we take death to be a dark and dismal hour ; but in the speech and spirit of faith, we call it a bright and glorious one. Sense esteems it to be the sorest of all afflictions, but faith numbers it among the sweetest of our blessings, because it delivers us from a thousand sins and sorrows.

It has been reported, that Socrates called "death a birth-day into eternal life." A most glorious thought, and a very inviting name ! But it is strange, that a heathen philosopher should ever hit upon it, it is so much like the dialect of the gospel, and the language of faith. He had learned to talk more nobly than the sensual world, though he was not favored with the light of the gospel. It is so much the more shameful for Christians, to talk and to live below the character of this philosopher.

O when shall we get above this life of sense ? When shall we rise in our ideas and our judgment of things ? When shall we

attain to the upper regions of Christianity, and breathe in a purer air, and see all things in a brighter and better light? When shall we live the life of faith, and learn its divine language? Death is like a thick dark veil, as it appears to the eye of sense: When shall our faith remove the veil, and see the light, the immortality, the glory that lies beyond it? Death, like the river Jordan, seems to overflow its banks, when we approach it, and divides and affrights us from the heavenly Canaan: When shall we climb to the top of Pisgah, that we may look beyond the swelling waves of this Jordan, and take a fair and inviting prospect of the promised land?

II. How glorious and how dreadful is the difference, between the death of a saint and that of a sinner, a soul that is in Christ, and a soul that has no interest in him! The death of every sinner, has all that real evil and terror in it, which it appears to an eye of sense; but a convinced sinner beholds it yet a thousand times more dreadful. When conscience is awakened upon the borders of the grave, it beholds death in its utmost horror, as the curse of the broken law, as the accomplishment of the threatenings of an angry God. A guilty conscience looks on death with all its formidable attendants round it, and espies an endless train of sorrows coming after it. Such a wretch beholds death riding towards him on a pale horse, and hell following at his heels, without all relief or remedy, without a Saviour, and without hope.

But a true Christian, when he reads the name of death among the curses of the law, knows that Christ his Saviour and his Surety, has sustained it in that dreadful sense, and put an end to its power and terror. He reads its name now in the promises of the gospel, and calls it a glorious blessing, a release from sin and sorrow, an entrance into everlasting joy. The saint may lie calm and peaceable in the midst of all the attendants of death; like Daniel in the den of lions, for it cannot hurt or destroy him: But when a sinner is thrown to this devourer, it does, as it were, break all his bones, it tears both his flesh and his spirit, as its proper prey: *Death feeds upon him*, as the Scripture expresses it; *Psalm xlix. 14.* and fills his conscience with immortal anguish. Who can bear the thought of dying in such a state under the dominion of death, without Christ, and without hope!

III. How much does the religion of the New Testament transcend all other religions, both that of the light of nature, and all the former revelations of grace; for it better instructs us how to die. The religion of the ancient patriarchs, the religion of Moses and the Jews, as well as the religion of the philosophers, all come vastly short of Christianity, in the important business of dying.

The philosopher, by the labors of his reason, and by a certain hardness of spirit, persuades himself not to tremble at the thoughts of death ; for it may be, there is no hereafter ; or if there be, he would fain hope for an happy one : And thus he ventures into death, with some sort of courage and composure of mind, like a bold man, that is taking an immense leap, in the dark, out of one world into another ; but he can never know certainly, that there are no terrible things to meet him in that unseen state.

The religion of the Jews and patriarchs, which God himself revealed to men, enabled many of them to resign their lives with patience and hope, and to walk through the valley of death without much dismay, when the appointed hour was come. A few of them, I confess, have been elevated by a noble faith above the level of that dispensation : Yet some of them seem to make bitter mourning, because of the shadows of darkness that covered the grave, and all the regions beyond it. *They were all their life-time subject to bondage, through the fear of death ; Heb. ii. 14.*

It is our Jesus alone, who has *brought life and immortality into so glorious a light by the gospel* ; 2 Tim. i. 10. He dwelt long in heaven before he came into our world, and again he went as a forerunner into those unseen worlds, and came back again and taught his disciples, what heaven is : And thus we learn to overcome death with all its terrors, by the richer prospect, which he has given us, of the heavenly country that lies beyond the grave : He has taught his followers to rejoice in dying, and to possess the pleasures that are to be derived from death, as it is an entrance into the regions of light and joy. Blessed be God ! that we were born in the days of the Messiah, since Christ returned from the dead, and that we are not sent either to the schools of the philosophers, or even to Moses, to teach us how to die.

IV. Learn from these discourses, what a sweet and delightful glory belongs to the covenant of grace, that turns a curse into a blessing. When the broken law, or covenant, of works attempts to curse thee with death, O believer (as Balaam did Israel), *the Lord thy God turns the curse into a blessing to thee by this new covenant, because the Lord thy God loveth thee* ; Deut. xxiii. 5. So afflictions are turned into mercies by the virtue of this covenant, they mortify our sins, they wean us from the world, they bring our hearts near to God, they make us partakers of his holiness. So death, which is the greatest affliction to nature, and has such a formidable aspect to a sensual man, is made subservient to the eternal welfare of a Christian. It is this sweet covenant that has wrought the change ; Christ has conquered it, and the believer enjoys the triumph.

Does the eye of nature behold death as a serpent? Our Lord Jesus has broken its teeth, and taken away its sting; for by his sacrifice he has abolished sin, which is the sting of death. Does nature look upon death as a lion? Our Redeemer has slain it, and the covenant of grace has furnished the carcase of it with honey, and stored it with delicious food for the entertainment of a Christian; thus, *Out of the eater cometh forth meat, and out of the strong cometh forth sweetness*; Judges xiv. 14. The riddle of Samson, when applied in this manner, carries a diviner beauty in it, and more exquisite delight. And as that Jewish champion feasted his father and his mother with delicacies taken out of the lion he had slain, so does our Lord feast his brethren and his friends with sacred pleasures derived from death, our vanquished enemy.

O how unspeakable is the privilege of those that belong to Christ! If you are his, then death is yours: Christ is the only begotten Son, and he inherits all things; not only as a Son, but as the first overcomer: *Ye all are the sons of God by faith in Christ Jesus*; Gal. iii. 26. *Ye shall also be overcomers, and shall inherit all things*; Rev. xxi. 7. *Whether life or death, things present or things to come, all are yours, for ye are Christ's.* I proceed to the practical uses.

I. If death, in every sense, may be turned to the advantage of the saints, as I have proved in the former discourse, let us see then, that, in all its appearances, we gain some advantage by it. Let us not act like fools, who have a prize put into their hands, and know not how to use it.

If our fellow-creatures die and go down to the dust, and the nations of mankind perish from the earth, let us learn thereby the frailty of our natures; let us learn so to *number our days, as to apply our hearts to wisdom*; Psalm xc. 12. and be awakened to an active and immediate preparation for the day of our own death. If we see impenitent sinners dying under the anguish of a guilty conscience, let us gain a sensible lesson of the dreadful evil of sin; let it raise such a religious fear of the wrath of God, and such a sacred gratitude for our deliverance, from the torments of hell, as may quicken every grace into its warmest exercise, and its brightest evidence. If death seize upon our Lord Christ himself, his dying groans lay a foundation for our immortal hopes: Let us meditate on the thousand blessings we receive from his cross and his tomb. Do the saints around us lie down and die? We should learn to follow them boldly into the dark valley, and to fall asleep in the dust with the same cheerful hope of the joyful rising-day. Does death come near us into our own family, and tear our dear relatives from our arms?

Even this may be turned to our advantage too: It should render the world and the pleasures of it more insipid and worthless: It should loosen our heart-strings from the fond embraces of the creature; for it calls our eyes and our souls heavenward and homeward, and that with a loud and sensible voice, if nature and grace are awake to hear it.

If death and the grave be ours, and we make no use of this privilege, we are like misers, who have treasure in their possession, but never employ it to any valuable purpose. Has Christ our Lord taken death among his captives, and made it his own property? Let us look upon ourselves as humble sharers in the victory; he has appointed it to serve the interest of all his followers: He has put it into the inventory of our treasures. Let us improve it then to these divine purposes, let us seize and enjoy the spoils *which Christ the Captain of our Salvation, has taken from the hands of the prince of darkness.*

II. Is death become your possession, O believers, through the grace of the covenant? Fear it not, then, but ever look upon it with an eye of faith as a conquered adversary: Behold it, as reduced to your service; wait for it, with holy courage and pleasure; it is a messenger of mercy to your souls from Christ, who hath vanquished it in the open field of battle, and reduced it to his subjection. When you labor and groan under sins and temptations, under pains and sorrows, remember Christ has appointed death to be his officer, for your relief. It is like the porter that opens the door of his repository, the grave, where your bodies shall take a sweet slumber till the resurrection-day; and it is appointed also to open the gates of heaven for your spirits, and to let them into a world of unknown felicity.

Death has so many things belonging to it, which are afflictive to nature, and formidable to the eye of sense, that we have need of all manner of assistance to raise our souls above the fear of it. The very thought of dying makes many a Christian shudder, and sweat, and tremble, and awakens all the springs of human infirmity; O may the grace of faith gain a more glorious ascendancy in our souls! We should often meditate on such doctrines as these, which place that dreadful thing death, in the most easy and pleasing light; we should behold it as changed from a curse into a blessing, and numbered among our treasures. Christians should accustom themselves to look at it through the glass of the gospel, which casts fair colors upon what is in itself so dark and formidable. It is the gospel is that glass which discovers to us the flowery blessings that grow in that gloomy valley, and gives a fair and de-

lightful prospect of those hills of paradise and pleasure that lie beyond the grave. Why should we let this blessed gospel lie neglected, and live still in bondage to the fear of dying?

The Recollection.—“Come now, and let us learn by this discourse to shame ourselves out of these weaknesses, these unreasonable fears. Let us talk to our own souls in the language of faith. Why, O my soul, why art thou afraid to let this body die? Hast thou not endured labors and trials enough, and art thou unwilling to come to the end of them? Hast thou not yet been tempted enough? Hast thou not been foiled too often, and too often thrown down in the conflict? Think of thy many wounds of conscience, the bruises of thy spirit, the defilement of thy garments, and the loss of thy purity and thy peace. Canst thou bear, that all these should be repeated again and again? Art thou unwilling this war should have an end? Art thou afraid of victory and triumph? What dost thou labor and fight for? Dost thou not run to obtain the prize? Dost thou not wrestle and fight to gain the crown? And hast thou not courage enough to go across the dark valley, to take possession of this crown and this prize?

“Think, O my spirit, think of thy painful ignorance whilst thou dwellest in this region of shadows: Is not knowledge thy natural and delicious food? Hast thou not lived long enough in darkness, and been involved too long in mistakes and errors? And art thou willing to dwell in a land of darkness still, a land of dreams and disguises, where truth is hardly found? Art thou afraid of the borders of that world, where light and knowledge grow, and where truth and realities appear all unveiled, and without disguise? Where thou shalt be cheated no more with the sound of words, but shalt see all things just as they are, in a clear light, without error, and without confusion? O happy period of thy mistakes and wanderings, of all thy learned mazes in quest of truth! And art thou still afraid to come near it?

“Has it not been the matter of thy sacred mourning, that thy God is so much concealed from thee, that greatest and best of Beings? That the Son of God, *the brightness of the Father's glory*; Heb. i. 3. is so much a stranger, and thy Saviour is so little known? That thy faith has been laboring and wearied in many enquiries about the glories of his person as God-man, about the wonders of his united natures, and the mysteries of his gospel; about the power of his death, the virtue of his righteousness, and the sovereignty of his grace? And art thou afraid of the sunshine, and that perfect day that shall scatter all these clouds of doubt and mistake, and let thee see thy Saviour and thy God face to face, as they are seen by angels? O that surprising hour, of unknown delight, that

shall place thee, O my soul, in the midst of the world of spirits, surrounded with the light of heaven, and in the open presence of God, even thy God ! When thou shalt gain swift and transporting acquaintance with the Almighty Being that made thee, and the Son of God, who dwelt once in mortal flesh, and died to save thee ! When the divine irradiations of the eternal Spirit shall unfold those mysteries to thy view, which had so much darkness about them in these lower regions ! What an illustrious scene of light and joy shall arise all around thee, as thou enterest into that unknown state ! What strange new ideas of things, what new worlds of knowledge shall throng in upon thee, and thy enlarged understanding shall receive them all with infinite satisfaction, and with ever-growing pleasure ! Art thou not already on the wing, my soul, at such a divine prospect as this ? O stupid creatures that we are ! we seek after the light of truth here below, and crowd about a little glimmering spark of knowledge, we wrangle all around it with endless contention, and yet when death would open the gate of glory, and admit us into regions of light, we start back, and retire, contented to abide among twilight and shadows.

“ But, O my soul, if truth and knowledge are not sufficient to allure thee, has holiness no constraining power ? Hast thou not sinned enough, and broken the laws of God often enough already ? Hast thou not brought guilt enough, and grief enough, upon thyself, that thou art afraid of a state of perfect holiness ? What is it that has given thee such inward pain as the perpetual workings of thy native iniquity ? What is it that has made thee cry out, *O wretched creature that I am ! Who shall deliver me from the body of this death ? Rom. vii. 24.* From the temptations and the sins which are mingled with flesh and blood ? And art thou afraid to have thy groans ended, thy complaints removed, and thy deliverance appear ? Art thou unwilling to accept of the release ? Dost thou shrink back from the sight of the deliverer ? Has not thy faith often seen the spirits of the just made perfect standing before the throne, rejoicing before God, worshipping in the complete beauty of holiness ? And has not this thy faith awakened thy desires and thy sacred wishes ? O that I were in the midst of them ! Why then art thou so unwilling to leave this body of sin and darkness, and to go out of this troublesome and impure prison into that glorious world, that blessed assembly, and to worship amongst them without imperfection, and without weariness ? Consider, O my soul, are thy complaints of indwelling corruption sincere ? Are thy groans for deliverance honest and hearty ? Why then art thou afraid to let this tabernacle be dissolved, and to gain a blessed re-

lease from these inbred and restless enemies ? Has not the lustre of perfect holiness attraction and force enough in it, to awaken thy longings, and stretch thy wings for a flight to heaven ?

“ Remember also, whilst thou art here, and art often sinning, many of the threatenings of God in his word stand bent against thee, his arrows sometimes stick in thy flesh, and pierce thy very soul. I confess these are not the sword of his vindictive justice, thy afflictions are but the corrections of his rod : But is it not better to dwell in that world where thou shalt feel no such correcting strokes, and deserve chastisement no more, where the Lord thy God shall lay aside every frown, and remove his anger for ever ?

“ Thy best life now is to live upon the promises : but does not all the excellency of a promise consist in the hope of performance ? And is not the performance then so much better than the promise itself ? Is not possession better than hope ? Is not an assured and an unchangeable possession better than this state of doubts and fears ? Is it not much more agreeable to *dwell in the house of God for ever* ? Psalm xxiii. 6. than only to make a visit to it now and then ? Is it not infinitely better to be fixed in a state of perfect felicity, without the least fear or apprehension of losing it ? To be as a *pillar in the temple of God, thy God, and to go no more out* ; Rev. iii. 13.

“ Think again, Hast thou not sustained sufficient pains and sorrows both of flesh and mind in this lower world ? Death shall put an end to them all ; and art thou unwilling to have a full release from sorrow and pain ? Has this flesh of thine been complained of so often as thy clog and thy painful prison, and art thou afraid to have thy fetters knocked off ? Has not thy body given thee smart and anguish enough ? And has it not tempted thee enough away from thy God, and thy truest happiness ? Has thy sinful sickly flesh been so charming a companion, that thou art not yet willing to part with it ? Dost thou not desire to have all thy diseases healed at once ? Wouldst thou not be glad to have all thy torments of body and mind for ever ceased, and all the uneasiness of flesh and spirit removed for ever ?

“ It is true, the mere desire of ease should not be the chief reason why thou shouldest desire death, nor shouldest thou seek it with an impatient spirit : It is thy duty to bear sufferings and sorrows with holy patience, as a good soldier of Christ ; it is thy duty to abide in thy post during his pleasure, to fill up the hours with service, and to sustain the fatigues and burdens of the mortal state to the glory of God thy Saviour : But he does not require that thou shouldest fall in love with a state of guilt and pain, a state that has

so much sin and temptation, so much burden and fatigue in it; he gives thee leave to groan after the hour of release and deliverance. *In this tabernacle we groan earnestly, being burdened;* 2 Cor. v. 2.

“Consider further, O my soul, what is there in this world that should make thee fond of continuing among the inhabitants of it? Has not the world, thou dwellest in, sufficiently discovered itself to thee, as a land of mere vanity and vexation, and art thou fond of the tents of Meshee and Kedar, where thy soul has so little peace? Art thou afraid to change thy dwelling-place? Hast thou not been teased long enough with the company of sinners, or the foolish and unfriendly carriage of those who are imperfect saints? Hast thou not been often ready to say, *O that I had the wings of a dove, to fly away from the windy storm and tempest!* Psalm lv. 6, 7. to get afar off from the rage and malice of enemies, from the trouble, some infirmities of friends, afar off from the peevishness, the envy, and the passion of some of thy fellow-Christians? How often hast thou wished even for a wilderness where thou mayest be at rest! Behold the door of death will shortly open itself to thee, and would let thee in, not to a wilderness, but to a paradise, to a place of eternal rest and freedom from all uneasy society; and yet thou delayest and hangest backward, and art afraid to go.

“In that upper world the saints have no follies about them, no vicious and fretful humors, no springs of vexation; they leave all their weaknesses, their envy, and their anger behind them in the grave. In the heavenly country every companion is an everlasting friend, and all thy dear and pious kindred, who are departed, have put off every thing that once made thee or them uneasy. They are far better company above than ever they were, or could be, here on earth; and dost thou not want to see them all in their best raiment of grace and glory; and to hold sweet communion with them in the purest intercourses of love?

“But there are still sweeter allurements to a holy soul; God, even thy God, dwells in the midst of his saints on high, and that in the full glories of his love: Jesus, the Saviour, whom thou hast known and whom thou hast loved, though thou hast never seen him; Jesus is Lord of that country, he waits for thee there: God himself dwells there as the fountain of felicity, and shall be no more absent from thee. Thou shalt no more complain of the withdrawings of the light of his countenance, or the short visits of his grace: Thou shalt sit solitary no more, nor mourn under the dark eclipses of the Sun of righteousness. It is the pleasure of that heaven thou hopest for, *to be for ever with thy Lord, to behold his glory, to see him as he is, and to be made like him;* and wilt thou not enter in at the gate

into the New Jerusalem when he calls thee, but tremble and start backward, because there is a short dark valley that lies on this side of it ?

“ Remember, O my soul, *death is thine* : There is nothing in that dark valley shall hurt thee. Lift up thy head, arise, and shake thyself out of the dust. Let thy faith take a sweet prospect over the little hills of time, and beyond the vale of death : Look far into the invisible world, and banish all thy fears under the strong allurement of the joys that are prepared for thee ; wait with pleasure for the hour of thy departure, and rejoice and triumph when the divine message shall come. While thou continuest here *life is thine*. When thou goest hence, *death is thine* ; *things present and things to come are thine* ; and the invisible world to which thou art hastening, has everlasting joys in reserve for thee : Heaven itself is thine : Heaven is the inheritance of all the saints : The glories laid up there are waiting for thy possession : The dissolution of thy earthly tabernacle shall convey thee into the midst of them.

“ Awake, arise, and meet the happy moment, when thou shalt be undressed of this sinful flesh and blood : O let these defiled garments ever sit loose about thee, that they may be cast off without pain and regret : Go, my soul, at the summons of thy God and Father, and when thy symptoms of dying nature shall say, *Hark he calleth thee* : let thy faith and thy love, and thy joy answer, *Lord, I come*. Go, my soul, at the invitation of thy Redeemer, at the voice of thy beloved : Behold he appears, he comes ! Go forth and meet him. Drop this fleshly clothing with holy delight ; arise, *put on thy beautiful garments*, and shine, for the *glory of the Lord is rising upon thee* : Go shine among *the spirits of the just made perfect*, thyself a spirit released from earth, and divested of all imperfection. O happy farewell to life and time ! O glorious entrance into immortality !”

## SERMON VII.

### THE HIDDEN LIFE OF A CHRISTIAN.

"For ye are dead, and your life is hid with Christ in God."—COL. iii. 3.

#### THE FIRST PART.

DEATH and life are two words of a solemn and important sound. They carry so much of force and moment in them, as must awaken mankind to attention: and therefore the Spirit of God often uses them as metaphors, to express things unseen and spiritual, and to describe the state both of saints and sinners; So that all who are alive on the face of the earth, in the language of Scripture, are said to be dead too, but in different senses. Those who are in a state of nature, and under the power of sin, unpardoned and unsanctified, are dead in trespasses and sins; yet they live the life of brutes in the lusts of the flesh, or the life of devils in the lusts of the mind; *Eph. ii. 1, 2.* Those who are recovered from the fall, and brought into a state of grace by the gospel of Christ, are said to be dead also; that is, they are dead to sin; *Rom. vi. 11.* and they are crucified, and so dead to the world; *Gal. vi. 14.* The delights of sin are hateful to them, so that they allure them not to forsake their God; and the lawful enjoyments of life are so far tasteless to the saints, in comparison of the things of heaven, that they have much less influence, than once they had, to tempt them away from God, and the practice of holiness.

It is in this sense the Christian Colossians are said to be dead in my text. But they have another, a new life, and that of a different kind; such as is mentioned in this verse, and which is hid with Christ in God; and it is this hidden life shall be the chief subject of my discourse.

These latter words of the text afford two plain and easy propositions or doctrines.

I. That the life of a Christian is a hidden life.

II. That it is hid with Christ in God. Let us meditate on them in order.

Doctrine I. A Christian's life is a hidden life.—Here we shall, *First*, Consider what is this life, which is said to be hidden. And, *Secondly*, In what respects it is so.

*First,* What is this life of a Christian which is said to be hidden ?

Not the animal life, whereby he eats, drinks, sleeps, moves and walks ; this is visible enough to all about him. Not the civil life, as he stands in relation to other men of the world, whether as a son, as a father, a master or a servant, a trader, a laborer, or an officer in the state : For all these are public, and seen of men.

But the hidden life is that whereby he is a Christian indeed ; his spiritual life, wherein he is devoted to God, and lives to the purposes of heaven and eternity. And this is the same life, which, in other parts of Scripture, is called eternal ; for the life of grace survives the grave, and is prolonged into glory. The same life of piety and inward pleasure, whch begins on earth, is fulfilled in heaven ; and it may be called the spiritual, or the eternal life, according to different respects ; for it is the same continued life acting in different stations or places, and running through time and eternity ; *1 John v. 11, 12.* Eternal life is in the Son, and he that hath the Son, hath this life ; it is begun in him, he is already possessed of it in some degree.

As the life of the child is the same with that of the full-grown man ; as the same vital principles and powers run through the several successive stages of infancy, youth and manhood ; so the divine life of a saint, begun on earth, runs through this world, through death, and the separate state of souls ; it appears in full-grown perfection, in the final heaven, when the whole saint shall stand complete in glory. Thus the spiritual life of a Christian is eternal life begun ; and eternal life is the spiritual life made perfect.

If we would describe this life in short, it may be represented thus : It is a life of faith, holiness and peace ; a life of faith, or dependance upon God for all that we want ; a life of holiness, rendering back again to God, in a way of honor and service, whatsoever we receive from him in a way of mercy ; and a life of peace in the comfortable sense of the favor of God, and our acceptance with him through Jesus Christ. All these begin on earth, and in this sense faith itself, as well as peace and holiness, shall abide in heaven ; we shall for ever be dependants, for ever happy and for ever holy.

In a state of nature man lived such a sinful and carnal life, that was more properly called death ; but when he becomes a believer, a true Christian, he is new created ; *2 Cor. v. 17.* new-born ; *John iii. 3.* raised from the dead, and quickened to a new life ; *Eph. ii. 1, 5.* which is called being risen with Christ, in the verses before my text ; *Col. iii. 1.* And this very spiritual life, as the effect of our symbolical resurrection with Christ, is the subject of several verses of the 6th chapter to the Romans, whence I cannot but infer the same to be designed here, *viz.* that the Christian who is dead

to sin, is risen with Christ, and alive to God; as *Rom.* vi. 11. All the life that he lived before, with all the shew and bravery of it, with all the bustle and business, the entertainments and delights of it, was but a mere dream, a fancy, the picture of life, a shadow and emptiness, and but little above the brutes that perish. Now he lives a real, a substantial, a divine life, a-kin to God and angels, and quite of a different nature from what the men of this world live.

There is this difference indeed which the Scripture makes between the spiritual life and the eternal. / The first chiefly respects the operations of the soul, for the life of the body is not immortal here: the second includes soul and body too, for both shall possess immortality hereafter. The first is attended with many difficulties and sorrows; the second is all ease and pleasure. The first is represented as the labor and service: the last, as the great, though unmerited, reward; *Gal.* vi. 8. He that soweth to the Spirit, and fulfils the duties of the spiritual life, shall of the Spirit reap life everlasting. The one is the life of holiness and inward peace, though mingled with many defects, and surrounded with a thousand disadvantages and trials; the other, is the same life of holiness and peace, having surmounted every difficulty, shining and exulting in full joy and glory.

*Secondly,* We come to consider, in what respect this life may be called a hidden life.

And here I shall distinguish that part of it, which is more usually called the spiritual life, and is exercised in this world, from that which is more frequently called life eternal, and belongs rather to the world to come; and then I shall make distinct inferences from the consideration of each.

Now let us consider wherein the spiritual life is said to be hidden.

I. The acts and exercises of it are secret and unknown to the public world. The saint is much engaged in the important and hidden concerns of his divine life; and his converse is with God and Christ, who dwell in the world of invisibles.

Who knows the secret transactions between God and the soul of a Christian, when he first entered into covenant with God, through Christ the Mediator, and began this happy life? Who can tell the inward working of his spirit towards Jesus Christ his Lord in the first efforts of his faith, and embraces of our Saviour? Who was acquainted with the secret sorrows of his soul, when he was first set a mourning for his past sins, and humbled himself in bitterness before God? Or who can express the surprising delight, and secret satisfaction he felt at heart, when God communicated to him

the first lively hope of forgiveness and divine salvation? O the unknown joys of such an hour which some Christians have experienced, when a divine beam of light shone into their souls, and revealed Jesus Christ within them as St. Paul speaks: when they saw his all-sufficiency of righteousness and grace, to answer their infinite necessities; and when they durst believe in him as their Saviour!

And as the beginnings of this life are hidden from the world, so the exercises and progress of it are a secret too. While the world is following after idols and vanity, the Christian in his retired chamber, breathes after his God and his Redeemer, and gives a loose to his warmest affections, in the pursuit of his Almighty Friend, and his best beloved. While the men of this world are vexing their spirits, and fretting under present disappointments, he dwells in a lonesome corner, mourning for his sins and follies. And at another time, while the children of vanity grow proud in publick and boast of their large possessions, and inheritances, he rejoices in secret, in the hope of glory, and takes divine delight in the forethought of his better inheritance among the saints: his conversation is in heaven; *Phil.* iii. 20.

I might run through all the exercises of the sanctified affections, and the various parts of the divine worship, and of the conduct of a saint among the children of men. With what humble fear does he entertain the mention of the name of God! With what deep self-abasement, and inward adoration! At the presence of sin, how is his anger stirred! and his holy watchfulness when temptations appear! how does he labor and wrestle, fight and strive, lest he be overcome by the secret enemies of his soul! And as his bitterness of heart is unknown to the world, so *a stranger intermeddles not with his joy*; *Prov.* xiv. 10. He feeds on the same provision which his Lord Jesus did on earth, for it is his meat and his drink to do the will of his Father which is in heaven: This is a feast to the Christian, which the world knows not of; *John* iv. 32, 34.

II. The springs and principles of this life are hidden and unknown to the world; and therefore the world esteems many of the actions of a true Christian very strange and unaccountable things, as we shall shew afterward, because they see not the springs of them.

The word of God, or the gospel, with all the hidden treasures of it, is the chief instrument, or means, whereby this divine life is wrought and supported in the soul. The true Christian beholds the purity of God in the precepts; he reads grace, heaven, and glory, in the promises; he sees the words of the Bible in a divine light, and feeds sweetly on the hidden blessings of Scripture, deriving life, and nourishment, and joy from it; whereas the carnal

world go not far beyond the letters and syllables. The gospel, which is all light and glory to a saint, is hidden to them that are lost; 2 Cor. iv. 3. This same gospel is written in the heart of a Christian, and is the principle of his life there. This is immortal and incorruptible, the seed of the word abiding in the heart; the image of the eternal God, drawn out in such characters as our nature can bear: For the written word is a transcript of God's holiness; and when it is inwrought into all the powers of a believing soul, it becomes a vital principle within him for ever. A believer is, as it were, cast in the very mould of the gospel; so the word signifies; Rom. vi. 17. This is the word hidden in the heart, that secures the saint from sin; Psalm cxix. 11.

The motives and springs that awaken a Christian to keep up, and maintain this spiritual life, are things hidden from the eyes of the world; things eternal and invisible; 2 Cor. iv. 18. *While we look not at the things that are seen, that are temporal; but at the things that are unseen and eternal;* we then count the joys or sorrows of this world, things of little importance; then we live like Christians, and the life of our Lord Jesus is manifested, or copied out, in our lives; as ver. 10, 11.

The habits of grace and holiness in the hearts of believers, whence all the actions of the spiritual life proceed, are secret and hidden. Who knows how they were wrought at first? how this heavenly breath, this divine life was infused, which changed a dead sinner into a living saint? Our Saviour himself compares this work of the Spirit to the wind; John iii. 8. *We hear the sound, we feel and see the effects of it, but we know not whence it comes, nor whither it goes; so is every one that is born of the Spirit.* Who can describe those secret and almighty influences of the blessed Spirit on the mind and will of man, which work with such a sovereign, and yet such a gentle, and con-natural agency, that the believer himself hardly knows it, but by the gracious effects of it, and the blessed alterations wrought in his soul?

It is this glorious Agent, this Creator, this blessed Spirit, who is the uncreated principle of this life. The Spirit, as proceeding from our Lord Jesus Christ, begun this life at first in the soul: and the same glorious unseen power carries it on through all difficulties and oppositions, and will fulfil it in glory.

I must add also, that Christ himself, who is said to be our life in the verse following my text, is at present hidden from us; he dwells in the unseen world, and the heavens must receive him till the restitution of all things; Acts iii. 21. Christ Jesus is the bread from heaven; John vi. 32, 33, by which the believer is nour-

ished ; he is the hidden manna, the divine food of souls : it is upon him the Christian lives daily and hourly ; it is upon the blood of the Lamb, which is carried up to the mercy-seat, that the believer lives for pardon and peace with God : It is upon the righteousness of his Lord and Head, that he lives for his everlasting acceptance before the throne ; it is upon the grace and strength of Christ that he rests and depends all the day, when he is called forth to encounter the boldest temptations, to fulfil the most difficult duties, or to sustain the heaviest strokes of a painful providence. “*Surely, saith the saint, in the Lord alone have I righteousness and strength ;* Isaiah xlvi. 24. In the Lord my Saviour, whom the world sees not ; but I see him by the eye of faith.”

I shall enlarge farther on this subject under the second doctrine.

Thus, whether we consider the spiritual acts and exercises of this Christian life, or the springs and principles of it, still we shall find it has just reason to be called a secret, or a hidden life.

Before I proceed, I shall lay down these two cautions :

1st Caution. Though it is a hidden life, yet I entreat my Christian friends, that they would not suffer it to be such a secret, as to be unknown to themselves. God has ordained it to be hidden, not that it might always be unknown to you, but that you might search after it with diligence ; and that when you find yourselves possessed of it, you might rejoice in the evidences of your life and his love. Be not satisfied then, O ye professors of the gospel ! until you have searched and found this divine life within you. What a poor life must that Christian live who goes from day to day, and from year to year, and still complains, I know not whether I am alive or no !

Labor, therefore, after self-acquaintance, since God has been pleased in his word, to furnish us with sufficient means to find out our estate ; 1 John v. 17. These things I write unto you, says the apostle, that ye may believe on the name of the Son of God, and that ye may know that ye believe. It is a dishonor to the gospel of Christ, to abide always in darkness and doubtings, and to rest contented in so uncomfortable a frame. We are told in Rev. ii. 17. that those whose life is supported by this hidden manna, have also a white stone given them, with a new name in it, which no man knows, save he that receives it ; that is, they have divine absolution and pardon of their sins, which was represented heretofore, in some courts of judicature, by the gift of a white stone ; but surely, if my own name were written in it, I would use my utmost endeavors to read the inscription myself, though it may be a secret to the rest of mankind ; then my God and Saviour shall have the honor of his pardoning love, and then my soul shall enjoy the consolation.

2d Caution. Though it be a hidden life in the sacred operations and the springs of it, yet the world ought to see the blessed effects of it. We must *hold forth* to men *the word of life*: Phil. ii. 16. Let the world see that we live to God, and that by the secret power of his word in the gospel.

The Christian life is no fantastic and visionary matter, that consists in warm imaginations, and pretences to inward light and rapture; it is a real change of heart and practice from sin to holiness, and a turn of soul from earth toward heaven. It has been dressed up, indeed, like enthusiastic foolery, by the impious wits of men, and painted for a subject of ridicule and reproach. Thus the saints and holy martyrs have been clad in a fool's coat, or a bear's skin, but they are still men, and wise men too; they have been dressed up like devils, but they are still the sons of God. So secret piety has solid reason and Scripture still on its side, whatever silly scandals have been cast upon it; there is no cause, therefore, to be ashamed of professing it. There is nothing in all the Christian life, that a man needs to blush at. *We have renounced the hidden things of dishonesty, knavery, and uncleanness, when we began to be Christians;* 2 Cor. iv. 2. It is our glory that we are alive to God, and we should be ashamed of nothing that either exercises or maintains this life. None of the duties of worship, none of the practices of godliness, that render religion honorable among men, and make God our Saviour appear glorious in the world, should be neglected by us, whenever we are called to practise or profess them.

The effect of this hidden life should not all be secret, though the springs of it are so: for Christians are commanded to make their *light shine before men, that others may glorify their Father which is in heaven*; Matt. v. 14, 15, 16. The lights of the world must not place themselves under a bushel, and be contented to shine there useless and alone; we must give honor to God in public. And though we are commanded to practise such secrecy and self-denial in our deeds of charity, as may secure us from all ostentation and pride, yet we must sometimes make it appear too, that we do good to men, that Christianity may have the glory of it. We must feed the hungry, we must clothe the naked, we must love all men, even our enemies, and discover to the world that we are Christians, by noble and sublime practices of every virtue and every duty, as far as it is possible, even by the best works, to discover inward religion.

I proceed now to draw some inferences from the hidden nature of the spiritual life.

I. And my first inference would teach you not to rest satisfied with any externals: for they who put forth no other acts of life, but what the world sees, are no true Christians.

We eat, we drink, and sleep; that is the life of nature; we buy and sell, we labor and converse; that is the civil life; we trifle, visit, tattle, flutter, and rove among a hundred impertinences, without any formed or settled design what we live for; that is the idle life; and it is the kindest name that I can bestow upon it. We learn our creed, we go to church, we say our prayers, and read chapters or sermons; these are the outward forms of the religious life. And is this all? Have we no daily secret exercises of the soul in retirement and converse with God? No time spent with our own hearts? Are we never busied, in some hidden corner, about the affairs of eternity? Are there no seasons allotted for prayer, for meditation; for reading in secret, and self-enquiries? Nothing to do with God alone in a whole day together? Surely this can never be the life of a Christian!

Remember, O man, there is nothing of all the labors or services, the acts of zeal or devotion, that thou canst practise in public, but a subtle hypocrite may so nearly imitate the same, that it will be hard to discover the difference. There is nothing of all these outward forms, therefore, that can safely and infallibly distinguish thee from a hypocrite and false professor; for the same actions may proceed from inward motions and principles widely different. If you would obtain any evidence that you are a Christian indeed, you must make it appear to your own conscience by the exercises of the hidden life, and the secret transactions between God and your soul. He was not a Jew of old, who was one outwardly in the letter only; nor is he a Christian, who has mere outward forms; but a Jew or a Christian, in the sight of God, is such a one as hath the religion in his heart, and in spirit, *whose praise is not of men, but of God*; Rom. ii. 28, 29.

II. Inference. The life of a saint is a matter of wonder to the sinful world; for they know not what he lives upon. The sons of ambition follow after grandeur and power; the animals of pleasure pursue all the luxuries of sense; the miser hunts after money, and is ever digging for gold. It is visible enough what these wise men live upon. But the Christian who lives in the power and glory of the divine life, seeks after none of these, any farther than as duty leads him, and the supports and conveniences of life are needful, in the present state of his habitation in the flesh. The sinner wonders what it is the saint aims at, while he neglects the tempting idols that himself adores, and despises the gilded vanities of a court, and

abhors the guilty scenes of a voluptuous life. Christ and his children are, and will be, signs and wonders to the age they live in ; *Isaiah vii. 18.* compared with *Heb. ii. 13.*

The men of this world wonder what a Christian can have to say to God in so many retiring hours as he appoints for that end ; what strange business he can employ himself in ; how he can lay out so much time in affairs which the carnal mind has no notion of. On the other hand, the saint, when he is in a lively frame, thinks that all the intervals of civil life, and all the vacant seasons that he can find between the necessary duties of his worldly station, are all little enough to transact affairs of such awful importance as he has to do with God, and little enough to enjoy those secret pleasures, which the stranger is unacquainted with. The children of God pray to their heavenly Father in secret, and they feel unknown refreshment and delight in it ; and they are well assured, that *their Father who seeth in secret will hereafter reward them openly* ; *Matt. vi. 6.*

It is no wonder, that the profane world reproaches true Christians as dull, lifeless creatures, animals that have neither soul nor spirit in them, because they do not see them run to the same excess in things of the lower life. Alas ! they know not the life of a Christian is on high ; they see it not, for it is hidden ; and therefore they wonder we are not busily engaged in the same practices and pursuits as they are ; *1 Pet. iv. 4.* *They think it strange that we run not to the same excess of riot.* The world sees nothing of our inward labor and strife against flesh and self, our sacred contest for the prize of glory ; they know nothing of our earnest enquiries after an absent God, and a hidden Saviour ; and least of all do they know the holy joys, and retired pleasures of a Christian, because these are things which are seldom communicated to others ; and therefore the world grows bold to call religion a melancholy thing, and the Christian a mere mope. But the soul who lives above, who lives within sight of the world of invisibles, can despise the reproach of sinners.

III. Inference. See the reason why Christians have not their passions so much engaged in things of this life as other men have, because their chief concern is about their better life, which is hidden and unseen. They can look upon fine equipages, gay clothes, and rich appearances in the world, without envy : they can survey large estates, and see many thousands gotten in haste by those that resolve to be rich, and yet not let loose one covetous wish upon them ; they have a God whom they worship in secret, and trust his blessing to make them sufficiently rich in the way of dili-

gence in their stations; they hope they shall have blessings mingled with their mean estate, and no sorrows added to their wealth.

They can find themselves exalted by providence to high stations in the world, and not be puffed up in countenance, nor swell at heart. If they are but watchful to keep their divine life vigorous they will distinguish themselves as Christians, even in scarlet and gold, and that by a glorious humility. They know that all their advancements on earth are but mean and despicable things, in comparison of their highest hopes, and their promised crown in heaven. They can meet threatening dangers, diseases, and deaths, without those terrors that overwhelm the carnal sinner; for their better life shall never die. They can sustain losses, and sink in the world, when it comes by the mere providence of God, without their own culpable folly, and bear it with a humble resignation of spirit, and with much inward serenity and peace; for the things which they have lost, were not their life; all these were visible, but their life is hidden; *Phil. iv. 12.* I know how to be abased, and how to be exalted; I know how to abound, and to suffer want; I can do all these things through Christ strengthening me: Christ, who is the principle of my inward life. O! that the Christians of our day had more of this sublime conduct, more of these noble evidences of the life of Christianity.

IV. Inference. How vain and needless a thing is it for a Christian to affect popularity, and to set up for a shew in this world. How vain is it for him to be impatient to appear and shine among men, for he has honors and treasures, joys and glories, that are incomparably greater, and yet a secret to the world. A Christian's true life is hidden, and he should not be too fond of public and gay appearances.

The apostle Peter gives advice how the Christian women should behave themselves not as the rest of the world do, who set themselves forth to public shew, with many ornaments of gold and pearl; but the believer should adorn herself with modesty, and with every grace, in *the hidden man of the heart*; *1 Pet. iii. 4.*

How unreasonable is it for us who profess the Christian life to be cast down, if we are confined to an obscure station in the world! Was not the Lord of glory, when he came down on earth to give us a pattern of the spiritual life, content to be obscure for thirty years together? Was he not unknown to men, but as a common carpenter, or a poor carpenter's son? And in those four years of appearance which he made as a preacher, how mean, how contemptible were the circumstances of life which he chose? And

shall we be impatient and fretful under the same humbled estate ? Do we dislike so divine a precedent ? Must we, like mushrooms of the earth, be exalted, and grow fond of making a public figure, when the King of heaven was so poor and lowly ; We lose public honor and applause indeed, but perhaps our hidden life thrives the better for it, when we resist the charms of grandeur.

Besides, this is not a Christian's time for appearing, whilst Christ himself is absent and unseen. The believer's shining-time is not yet come ; but the marriage-day of the Lamb is hastening, and the bride is making herself ready. The general resurrection is our great shining-day : *When Christ, who is our life, shall appear, then shall we also appear with him in glory ; Col. iii. 4.* and the Christian is content to stay for his robes of light, and his public honors, till the dawn of that glorious morning. Nor shall we dare to be censorious of those who make a poor figure, and but mean appearance in the world ; perhaps they are some of Christ's hidden ones ; they promise but little, and shew but little, either wit or parts, prudence or power, skill or influence ; and perhaps they have but little too ; but they know God, they trust in Christ, they live a divine life, and have glorious communications from heaven in secret daily, they make daily visits to the court of glory, and are visited by condescending grace. You see in all these instances, that popularity and shew are not at all necessary for a Christian.

V. Inference. How exceeding difficult it is for those who are exalted to great and public stations in the world to maintain lively Christianity ! They have need of great and uncommon degrees of grace to maintain this hidden life. *How hardly shall they that have riches enter into the kingdom of God !* These are our Saviour's own words ; *Mark x. 23.* and he gave this reason for it, *ver. 24.* because it is so hard for those that have riches, not to trust in them, not to live entirely upon them, and make them their very life.

How hard is it for men in high posts of honor, to take due care that their graces thrive, while they are all day engaged, either in the fatigues of office, in state and pomp of their own, or in everlasting attendances on the will of some superior ; so that they have few moments in a day, wherein they are capable of retiring, and holding any converse with themselves or with heaven. But O ! how pleasant is it to such as are advanced in the providence of God, and have a value for their hidden life, to steal an hour of retirement from the burden of their public cares ! How sweet is the recovery of a few minutes, and how well filled up with active devo-

tion ! The secret life of a Christian grows much in the closet, and without a retreat from the world it cannot grow. Abandon the secret chamber, and the spiritual life will decay : Doubtless many of you can witness that you have found it so ; and your own mournful experience echoes to the words of our ministry in this point.

There was an ancient philosopher, who, when he had lost his riches in a storm at sea, gave thanks to providence, under a heathen name ; "I thank thee, Fortune, that hast now forced me to retire, and to live within my cloak ; that is, upon the supports of philosophy, in meaner circumstances of life." How much more should the Christian be pleased with a private station, who has the supports of the gospel to live upon, and to sweeten his retirements ! How cautious should Christians be, therefore, of the management of all the public affairs of their civil life, lest they do any thing that should hurt their secret or religious life ! We should be still enquiring, "Will such sort of company to which I am now invited ; such a gainful trade which I am ready to engage in ; such a course of life which now lies before me ; tempt me to neglect my secret converse with God ? Does it begin to alienate my heart from heaven, and things unseen ? then let me suspect and fear it." Be afraid, Christians, of what grieves the blessed Spirit of Christ, who is the principle of your life, and may provoke him to retire from you. Be diligent in such enquiries, be very watchful and jealous of every thing that would call your thoughts outward, and keep them too long abroad. Christians should live much at home, for theirs is a hidden life.

VI. Inference. We may see here the divine wisdom in contriving the ordinances of the gospel, with such plainness, and such simplicity, as best serves to promote the hidden life of a Christian. Pomp and ceremony, gilded and sparkling ornaments, are ready to call the soul abroad, to employ it in the senses, and to divert it from that spiritual improvement, which the secret life of a Christian requires, and which gospel institutions were designed for.

You see in the heathen world, and you see in popish countries, that the gay splendors of worship tempt the hearts of the worshippers to rest in forms, and to forget God ; and we may fear that the greatest part of the people lay under the same danger in the days of Judaism. I grant indeed, that where pompous and glittering rites of religion are of special divine appointment, and were designed to typify the future glories of a more spiritual church and worship ; there they might hope for divine aids to lead their minds onward beyond the type, to those designed glories. But carnal

worshippers are the bulk of any sect or profession. All mankind, by nature, is ready to take up with the forms of godliness, and neglect the secret power. We naturally pay too much reverence to shining formalities and empty shews. Set a Christian to read the most spiritual parts of gospel, on one page of the Bible, and let some scene of the history be finely graven, and painted on the opposite side : his holy meditations will be endangered by his eyes, fair figures and colors attract the sight, and tempt the soul off from refined devotion.

I cannot think it any advantage to Christian worship, to have churches well adorned by the statuary and the painter ; nor can gay altar pieces improve the communion service. While gaudy glittering images attract and entertain the outward sense, the soul is too much attached to the animal, to keep itself at a distance ; while the sight is regaled and feasted, the sermon runs to waste, and the hidden life withers and starves. When the ear is soothed with a variety of fine harmony, the soul is too often allured away from spiritual worship, even though a divine song attend the music.

Our Saviour therefore, in much wisdom, and in much mercy, has appointed blessed ordinances for his church, with such plainness and simplicity, as may administer most support and nourishment to the secret life.

Thus I have finished the remarks on the hidden life of a Christian, considered as to its spiritual exercises in this present world.

I proceed to consider, in what respects this life is hidden as it is more usually called eternal life, or to be exercised and enjoyed in heaven.

And here we must confess, that we are much at a loss to say any thing more than the Scripture hath said before us. *Life and immortality*, indeed, *are brought to light by the gospel of Christ*, in far brighter measures than the former ages and dispensations were acquainted with ; 1 Tim. i. 10. But still, what the apostle says concerning all the blessings of the gospel, we may repeat emphatically concerning heaven, that eye hath not seen, that ear hath not heard, that it hath not entered into the heart of man to conceive ; nor indeed hath God himself revealed but a very small part of the things he hath prepared, in the future world, for them that love him ; 1 Cor. ix. 10. *It doth not yet appear what we shall be* ; the glory of that state is yet a great secret to us ; 1 John iii. 2. We know much better what it is not, than what it is : we can define it best by negatives. Absent from the weaknesses, sins, and sorrows of this life, is our best and largest account of it, whether we speak of the separate state, or the heaven of the resurrection.

The veil of flesh and blood divides us from the world of spirits ; we know not the manner of their life in the state of separation ; we are at an utter loss as to their stations and residences ; what relation they bear to any part of this material creation ; whether they dwell in thin airy vehicles, and are inhabitants of some starry world, or planetary regions ; or whether they subsist in their pure intellectual nature, and have nothing to do with any thing corporeal, till their dust be recalled to life. We are unacquainted with the laws by which they are governed, and the methods of their converse : we know little of the businesses they are employed in, those glorious services for their God and their Saviour, in which they are avored with assistant angels ; and little are we acquainted with their joys, which are unspeakable, and full of glory. The very language of that world, is neither to be spoken, nor understood by us ; St. Paul heard some of the words of it, and had a faint glimpse of the sense of them ; but he could not repeat them again to mortal ears ; nor had he power, nor leave, to tell us the meaning of them ; *2 Cor. xii. 4.* For whether he was in the body, at that time, or out of the body, he himself was not able to determine.

And as for the heaven of the resurrection ; what sort of bodies shall be raised from the dust, for perfect spirits to dwell in, is as great a secret. A spiritual body is a mystery to the wisest divines and philosophers ; where our habitation shall be, and what our special employment through the endless ages of immortality, are among the hidden unsearchables. The most that we know, is, that we shall be made like to Christ, and we shall be where he is, to behold his glory, *1 John iii. 2.* and *John xvii. 24.*

If the eternal life of the saints be so much a secret at present, we may draw these two or three inferences from it.

I. Inference. How necessary is it for a Christian to keep faith awake and lively, that he may maintain his acquaintance with the spiritual and unseen world ! It is faith that converses with invisibles ; *faith is the substance of things hoped for, and the evidence of things not seen ; Heb. xi. 1.* It is faith that deals in hidden traffic, and grows rich in treasures that are out of sight. It is by faith in the Son of God, we live this spiritual life, by faith in an absent Saviour ; *Gal. ii. 20.* *Whom having not seen, we love ; and though we see him not, yet believing, we rejoice ; 1 Pet. i. 8.* Let the Christian, therefore, maintain a holy jealousy, lest too much converse with the things of sense, dull the eye of his faith, or weaken the hand of it. Let him put his faith in perpetual exercise, that he may live within the view of those glories that are hidden from sense ; that he may keep his hold of eternal life ; that he may support his hopes,

and secure his joys. Until we can live by sight, let us *walk by faith*; 2 Cor. v. 7.

Though the life of heaven be hidden, yet so much of it is revealed as to give faith leave to lay hold of it; and yet not so much, as to make the hand of faith needless. It is brought down by our Lord Jesus Christ in the gospel, within the view of faith, that we might live in expectation of it, and be animated to the glorious pursuit; but it is not brought within the reach of sense, for we are now in a state of trials; and this is not the proper time nor place for sight and enjoyment.

II. Inference. How little is death to be dreaded by a believer, since it will bring the soul to the full possession of its hidden life in heaven! It is a dark valley that divides between this world and the next; but it is all a region of light and blessedness beyond it. We are now borderers on the eternal world, and we know but little of that invisible country. Approaching death opens the gates to us, and begins to give our holy curiosity some secret satisfaction; and yet how we shrink backward when that glorious unknown city is opening upon us! and are ready to beg and pray that the gates might be closed again: "O! for a little more time, a little longer continuance in this lower visible world!" This is the language of the fearful believer: but it is better to have our Christian courage wrought up to a divine height, and to say, "*Open, ye everlasting gates, and be ye lift up, O ye immortal doors,* that we may enter into the place where *the King of Glory is.*" There shall we see God, the great unknown, and rejoice in his overflowing love. We shall see him not as we do on earth, darkly, through the glass of ordinances; but inferior spirits shall converse with the supreme Spirit, as bodies do with bodies; that is, face to face; 1 Cor. xiii. 12.

There shall we behold Christ our Lord in the dignity of his character as Mediator, in the glory of his kingdom, and the all-sufficiency of his Godhead; and we shall be for ever with him. There shall we see millions of blessed spirits, who have lived the same hidden life as we do, and passed through this vale of tears, with the same attending difficulties and sorrows, and by the same divine assistances. They were unknown, and covered with dust as we are, while they dwelt in flesh, but they appear all-glorious and well-known in the world of spirits, and exult in open and immortal light; we shall see them, and we shall triumph with them in that day; we shall learn their language, and taste their joys; we shall be partakers of the same glory, which Christ our life diffuses all around him, on the blessed inhabitants of that intellectual world.

III. Inference. How glorious is the difference between the two

parts of the Christian's life, *viz.* the spiritual life on earth, and the perfection of eternal life in heaven ; when all that is now hidden shall be revealed before men and angels.

Come now, and let us take occasion from this discourse, to let loose our meditations one stage beyond death and the separate state ; even to the morning of the resurrection, and the full and public assembly of all the saints. O what an illustrious appearance ! What a numerous and noble army of new creatures ! Creatures that were hidden in this world among the common herd of mankind, and their bodies hidden in the grave, and mingled with common dust, rising all at once, at the sound of a trumpet, into public light and glory ; the same persons, indeed, that once inhabited mortality, but in far different equipage and array. The Christian, on earth, is like the rough diamond among the common pebbles of the shore ; in the resurrection-day the diamond is cut and polished, and set in a tablet of gold. All that inward worth and lustre of holiness and grace, which are now hidden, shall be then visible and public before the eyes of the whole creation. Then the saints shall be known by their shining, *in the day when the Lord makes up his jewels* ; Mal. iii. 17. When the spirits of the just made perfect in all the beauties of holiness, shall return to their former mansions, and become men again ; when their bodies are raised from the dust, in the likeness of the body of our blessed Lord, how shall all the saints shine in the Kingdom of their Father, though in the kingdom of this world they were obscure and undistinguished ! They shall appear, in that day, as the meridian sun breaking from a long and dark eclipse ; and the sun is too bright a being to be unknown ; Matt. xiii. 43.

What is there in a poor saint here, that discovers what he shall be hereafter ? How mean his appearance now ! how magnificent in that day ! What was there in Lazarus on the dunghill, when the dogs licked his sores, that could lead us to any thought that he should be in the bosom of Abraham ? What is there in martyrs and confessors, described in *Heb.* xi. these holy men, with their sheep-skins, and their goat-skins upon them, wandering in deserts, and hidden in dens and caves of the earth ! What was there in these poor and miserable spectacles that looks like a saint in glory ? or that could give us any intimation what they shall be in the great rising day ?

*Now are we the sons of God, but it does not yet appear what we shall be ; 1 John iii. 2.* We can shew no pattern of it here below. Shall we go to the palaces of eastern princes and borrow their crowns and sparkling attire, to shew how the saints are dressed in

heaven? Shall we take the marble pillars, their roofs of cedar, their costly furniture of purple and gold, to describe the mansions of immortality? Shall we attend the chariot of some Roman general, with all the ensigns of victory, leading on his legions to triumph, and fetch robes of honor, and branches of palm to describe that triumphant army of Christian conquerors? The Scripture makes use of these resemblances, indeed, in great condescension, to represent the glories of that day, because they are the brightest things we know on earth. But they sink as far below the splendors of the resurrection, as earth is below heaven, or time is shorter than eternity.

What is all the dead lustre of metals, and silks, and shining stones, to the living rays of divine grace, springing up, and shooting into full glory? Faith into sight, hope into enjoyment, patience into joy and victory, and love into its own perfection! Then all the hidden virtues and graces of the saints, shall appear like the stars at midnight, in an unclouded sky. Then shall it be made known to all the world, these were the men that wept and prayed in secret; it shall be published then in the great assembly, these were the persons who wrestled hard with their secret sins, that sought the face of God, and his strength in their private chambers, and they are made more than overcomers through him that hath loved them. The poor trembling Christian who lived this hidden and divine life, but scarce knew it himself, nor durst appear among the churches on earth, shall lift up his head, and rejoice amidst the church triumphant; and the hidden scene of grace, that was watered with so many secret tears, shall spring up into a rich and illustrious harvest. This is the day which shall bring to light a thousand works of hidden piety, for the eternal honor of Christ and the saints; as well as the *hidden things of darkness*, to the sinners' everlasting confusion; *Matt. xxv.* and *1 Cor. iv. 5.*

Thus the spiritual life of Christians, which was concealed in this world, shall appear in the other in full brightness; and they themselves shall be amazed to see what divine honors Jesus the Judge shall cast upon their poor secret services and sufferings.

But in what supreme glory shall their life display itself, when both parts of the human compound are rejoined after so long a separation! This is life eternal indeed, and joy unspeakable. How gloriously shall the perfections and honors, both of body and mind, unfold themselves, and rise far above all that they heard, or saw, or could conceive! Each of them surprised, like the queen of Sheba in the court of Solomon, shall confess with thankful astonishment and joy, that not one half of it was told them, even in

the word of God. “And was this the crown, shall the Christian say, for which I fought on earth at so poor and feeble a rate? And was this the prize for which I ran with a pace so slow and lazy? And were these the glories which I sought with so cold and indifferent a zeal in yonder world? O shameful indifference! O surprising glories! O undeserved prize and crown! Had I imagined how bright the blessing was, which lay hidden in the promise, surely all my powers had been animated to a warmer pursuit. Could I have seen what I ought to have believed; had I but taken in all that was told me concerning this glorious and eternal life, surely I would have ventured through many deaths to secure the possession of it. O guilty negligence, and criminal unbelief! But thy sovereign mercy, O my God, has pardoned both, and made me possessor of the fair inheritance. Behold, I bow at thy feet for ever, and adore the riches of overflowing grace.” *Amen.*

## SERMON VIII.

### THE HIDDEN LIFE OF A CHRISTIAN.

"For ye are dead, and your life is hid with Christ in God."—COL. iii. 3.

#### THE SECOND PART.

It is to the Christian converts who were at Colosse, that the apostle addresses himself, in this strange language: Ye are dead, and yet I tell you where your life is. This divine writer delights sometimes to surprise his readers, by joining such opposites, and uniting such distant extremes. But can a dead person have any life in him? Yes, and a noble one too, ye are dead to the world, and dead to sin, but ye have a life of another kind than that which belongs to the sinners of this world: your life is spiritual and holy; theirs is sinful, and engaged in the works of the flesh: your life is heavenly, and seeks the things which are above; theirs is derived from the earth, and grovels in the dust: your life is everlasting, for your souls shall live for ever in a glorious state, and your bodies shall be raised from death into equal immortality, and a partnership of the same glory; but their best life is only a temporal one, and when that is at an end, all their joys and their hopes are for ever at an end too, and their eternal sorrows begin.

But this life of a Christian is a hidden life. That was the first doctrine I raised from the text. Both the operations and the springs of it, are a secret to the world, and the future glories of it, when it is most properly called eternal life, are still a greater secret, and much more unknown: Yet, saith the apostle, I can acquaint you where the springs of it lie, and whence all the future glories of it are to be derived; they are hidden in God, with our Lord Jesus Christ. Now by giving so short a hint, in a word or two, where this our life is hid, he has said something greater, and brighter, and more sublime, concerning it, than if he had shewn us, from a high mountain, at noon-day, all the kingdoms of this world, with all the dazzling glories of them, and then pointed downward, "there your life is."

Let this therefore be the second doctrine, and the subject of our present meditations, that the life of a Christian is hidden with

Christ in God. It is hidden in God, as the first original and eternal spring of it, and entrusted with Christ as a faithful Mediator; it is hid in God, where our Lord Jesus Christ is, and he is appointed to take care of it for us; for he also is called our life; *ver. 4.*

The method I shall take for the improvement of this truth, is, to explain these words of the apostle more at large, and then deduce some inferences from them.

The *first* enquiry will arise, in what respect the Christian's life is said to be hidden in God? And,

*Secondly*, What is meant by its being hidden with Christ?

I. *First*, In what respect is the life of a Christian said to be hidden in God?

The word God is taken in Scripture, either in general for the divine nature, which is the same in the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit; or, in particular, for the person of the Father. And I do not see any absolute necessity to determine, precisely, which was the meaning of the apostle in this place. The three particulars by which I shall endeavor to explain it, will include both. The life of a Christian is hidden in God; that is, in the all-sufficiency of the divine nature, in the purpose of the divine will, and in the secret engagements of the Father to his Son Jesus Christ, in the covenant of redemption.

I. The Christian's life is hidden in the all-sufficiency of the divine nature. And there are immense stores of life, of every kind, hidden in God, in this sense. This whole world of beings, that have, and have not souls, with all the infinite varieties of the life of plants, animals, and angels, were hidden in this fruitful and inexhaustible fund of the divine all-sufficiency, before God began to create a world. All things were then hidden in God; for of him are all things, and from him all things proceeded: *Rom. xi. 36.* Now this all-sufficiency of God consists in those powers and perfections, whereby he is able to do all things for his creatures; and ready to do all for his saints; these are most eminently his wisdom, his almighty, and his goodness.

There are inconceivable riches of goodness and grace in God, which are employed in furnishing out life for all his saints; and all the unknown preparations of future glory are the effects of his grace. *Eph. ii. 4.* *God, who is rich in mercy, for his great love wherewith he loved us, when we were dead in sins, hath quickened us together with Christ;* and he did it for this purpose, *that in the ages to come, he might shew the exceeding riches of his grace, in his kindness towards us through Christ Jesus:* *ver. 7.* Not all the goodness that appears in the rich provision he hath made for all the natural

world of creatures, nor all the overflowing bounties of his providence, since the first creation, are equal to those unsearchable treasures of mercy and goodness, which he hath employed for the spiritual welfare, and eternal life and happiness of his own chosen children ; and in the secret of this grace were all the blessings of his covenant hidden from eternity.

The divine wisdom is another part of his all-sufficiency. There are in God infinite varieties of thought and counsel, riches of knowledge, and wisdom unsearchable ; and he hath made these abound in his new creation, as well as in the old ; in the supernatural, as well as in the natural world. *Eph. i. 8. He hath abounded towards us, sinners, in this work of salvation, in all wisdom and prudence.* What surprising wisdom appears in the vital powers of an animal, even in the life of brutes that perish ! What glorious contrivance, and divine skill, to animate clay, and make a fly, a dog, or a lion of it ! What sublime advances of wisdom to create a living man, and join these two distinct extremes, flesh and spirit, in such a vital union, that has puzzled the philosophers of all ages, and constrained some of them to confess and adore a God ! And what a superior work of divinity, is it, to turn a dead sinner into a living saint, here on earth ! and then to adorn a heaven, with all its proper furniture, for the eternal life and habitation of his sons and his daughters ! What divine skill is required here ! What immense profusion of wisdom, to form bodies of immortality and glory, for every saint, out of the dust of the grave, and the ashes of martyred Christians ! Our spiritual and our eternal life are hid in the wisdom of God.

The power of God is his all-sufficiency too. The power that quickens and raises a soul to this divine life, must be almighty ; *Eph. i. 19, 20.* It is the same exceeding greatness of his power that works in us who believe, which wrought in our Lord Jesus Christ, when he raised him from the dead, and set him at his own right hand in heavenly places. It is the same powerful word *that commanded the light to shine out of darkness, that shone into our hearts,* when he wrought the knowledge of Christ there ; *2 Cor. iv. 6.* and when he commanded us, who lay among the dead, to awake, and arise, and live. Was it not a noble instance of power, to spread abroad these heavens of unknown circumference, with all the rolling worlds of light in them, the planets and the stars ? And the same hand is mighty enough, if these were not sufficient, to build a brighter heaven, fit for the saints to live in during all their immortality, and to furnish them with vital powers that shall be incorruptible and everlasting. Thus the life of the saints is hidden in the

almightiness of God, as well as in his wisdom and goodness. Thus it is contained in the all-sufficiency of the divine nature, and each part of it is ready to be produced into act, in every proper season.

2. The life of a Christian is hidden in the purposes of the divine will. And in this sense, the whole gospel, with all its wondrous glories and mysteries, is said to be hid in God ; *Eph.* iii. 9. When St. Paul preached *among the Gentiles the unsearchable riches of Christ*, he made all men see something of that mystery, which from the beginning of the world had been hid in God. And if this be compared with *Eph.* i. 9. we shall find that this mystery of the will, or good pleasure of God, was that which he eternally purposed in himself.

There is not one dead sinner awakened, and called into this divine and spiritual life here, or that shall ever be possessed of life eternal hereafter, but it was contained in the eternal secret purpose, and merciful design of God, before the world began. For it is a very mean conceit, and a disgraceful opinion concerning the great God, to imagine that he should exert his power to work life in souls, here in time, by any new purposes, or sudden designs, occasioned by any works or merit of theirs, which he had not formed and decreed in himself, long before he made man. This doctrine would represent God as a mutable being : but we know that he is unchangeable. There is nothing new in God ; and his immutability is that perfection of his nature which secures the performance of this divine purpose, and the life of every Christian.

3. I might add, in the third place, that the life of a Christian is hidden in the unknown engagements of the Father to his Son Jesus Christ the Mediator. That sacred and divine transaction betwixt the Father and the Son, is often intimated in the holy Scriptures, and some of the promises of that covenant are there represented ; *Psalm lxxxix. 19, 28, 29, 36, &c.* *I have laid help upon one that is mighty ; my mercy will I keep for him for ever, and my covenant shall stand fast with him ; his seed will I make to endure for ever, and his throne as the days of heaven.* Then when *the covenant of peace was between them both*, as it is expressed in *Zech. vi. 13.* then did the Father promise that he should have *a seed to serve him* ; *Psal. xxii. 30.* and this must be a living seed, and they must be raised up from among dead sinners, and they shall be made living saints in the world of grace, and in the world of glory.

Many of these promises are transcribed as it were, into the covenant of grace, and they are written down in Scripture for our present consolation and hope ; and many others are, doubtless, concealed from all but Jesus the Mediator ; they are hidden from men and angels,

and reserved to be known, by surprizing accomplishment, in the future bright ages, beyond the date of time, and to entertain the long successions of our eternity. Now the truth and faithfulness of God are those attributes of his nature which secure this covenant, and all the divine engagements of it ; both those which are revealed to the children of men, and those that are known only to the Son and the Father : but it is sufficiently evident, that all the degrees and powers of the spiritual and eternal life of the saints, with all the graces, glories, and blessings that shall ever attend them, are hidden and laid up in these sacred engagements and promises.

II. This leads me to the *second* enquiry ; and that is, what is meant by these words, *with Christ*, in my text ? and how the Christian *life is hid with Christ* ?

If I would branch this into three particulars also, I should express them thus :

1. Our life is hidden with Christ, as he is the great Treasurer and Dispenser of all divine benefits to the children of men. This is the high office to which the Father hath appointed him ; and this is the character that he sustains ; and he is abundantly furnished for the execution of this great trust. In this sense, all the stores of life and blessing, that ever shall be bestowed on the sinful race of Adam, are laid up in the hands of Christ, the Son of God.—*It hath pleased the Father that in him all fulness should dwell* ; Col. i. 19. And *he was full of grace and truth, that of his fulness we might receive grace for grace* ; John i. 14, 16. That is, a variety of graces and blessings answerable to that rich variety, with which our Lord Jesus Christ, the high-treasurer of heaven, was furnished from the hand of the Father. And to this purpose, perhaps, John v. 26. may be interpreted, compared with ver. 21. *As the Father hath life in himself, so hath he given to the Son to have life in himself; that as the Father raiseth up the dead, and quickeneth them, even so the Son may quicken whom he will.*

The blessed Spirit itself, as it is the great promise of the New Testament, and the glorious gift of God to men, was communicated to the Son, and by him bestowed upon us : for he went to heaven to receive the promise of the Spirit from the Father, and he shed it forth upon the apostles and the believers : *Acts ii. 33.* It is this Spirit who gave miraculous gifts to them heretofore, that is the immediate principle, or worker of divine life in dead souls now, and it is by this same Spirit, that he shall raise our dead bodies from the grave ; *Rom. viii. 11.* He is the spring of our spiritual and eternal life ; and he is dispensed to us from the Father, by the hands of the Son.

And here it is proper to take notice of the special manner wherein the Lord Jesus Christ is the treasurer, or keeper of life, and all divine benefits for the saints, and becomes the dispenser thereof to his people : He is ordained to stand in the relation of a head to them, and they are his body, his members. Thus our life is hidden with Christ, as he is the vital head of all his saints. Their life is hid with Christ, as the spirits and springs of life, for all the members in the natural body are said to be contained in the head. *Christ is the head of his own mystical body ; Eph. iv. 14, 16. from whom the whole body, fitly joined together, maketh to its own edification : it is the same vital spirit that runs through head and members. He that is joined to the Lord, is one spirit ; 1 Cor. vi. 17.* and therefore partakes of the same life.

Thus you see, that though the life of a Christian is hidden in God, in the all-sufficiency of his nature, and the purposes of his will ; yet our Lord Jesus Christ, as Mediator, is entrusted to keep it for him, and dispense it to him.

2. Our life is hid with Christ, as he is our forerunner, and the possessor of life, spiritual and eternal, in our name. And this may be described in a variety of instances, according to the various parts, as well as the several advancing degrees of our spiritual life, and the perfection of it in life eternal. When his human nature was first formed complete in holiness, it was a pledge and assurance, that we should one day be completely holy too ; for, as is the head so must the members be. In the original sanctification of his Spirit, flesh, and blood, we may read the certain future sanctification of every believing soul with its body too ; see *John xvii. 19.* and *Heb. ii. 11.*

Again ; when his body was raised from the dead, it was a pledge and pattern of our being raised from a death in sin, unto the spiritual life of a saint, as well as a certain assurance of the resurrection of our bodies into future glory. The first is evident from *Eph. ii. 6.* *When we were dead in sin, he hath quickened us together with Christ.* And *Rom. vi. 4.* *As Christ was raised up from the dead by the glory of the Father, even so we must also walk in newness of life ; for we are planted in the likeness of his resurrection ; ver. 5.* And in *1 Cor. xv. 12,* etc., the apostle builds his whole argument of the resurrection of the bodies of saints who are dead, from the rising of our Lord Jesus Christ out of his grave : *for Christ being risen from the dead ; ver. 20. is become the first-fruits of them that slept.* And as all that are united to Adam, by having him for their head must die ; so all who are one with Christ, and have him for their head shall be made alive ; which seems to be

the meaning of the 22d verse : *As in Adam all die, so in Christ shall all be made alive.*

When he ascended into the heavens, it was not merely in his own name, but in ours too, to take possession of the inheritance for the saints in light. *Heb. vi. 20.* Our hope enters within the vail, whither Jesus the forerunner is for us entered. And when he sat down at the right-hand of God in the heavenly places, it was as the great exemplar of our future advancement, and thereby gave us assurance, that we should sit down there too : and therefore the apostle, in the language of faith, anticipates these divine honors, and applies them to the Ephesians beforehand : *God hath raised us up together, says he, with Christ, and hath made us sit together in heavenly places in Christ Jesus.*

It was *through the blood of the everlasting covenant*, that Jesus *the great Shepherd of the sheep, was brought again from the dead* ; and it was *the God of peace* who raised him ; *Heb. xiii. 20.* And it is by virtue of his own blood, and righteousness, that he who once took our sins upon him, is now discharged : It is through his own sufferings that he appears with acceptance before the throne, and enjoys a divine life in the unchangeable favor of God ; and all this as our head, surety, and representative, giving us assurance hereby, that we, through the blood of the same covenant, shall be brought again from the dead too ; that we through the virtue of the same righteousness, and all-sufficiency of the same sacrifice, shall appear hereafter before God in glory, and stand in his eternal favor ; and as an earnest of it, we enjoy a life of holy peace and acceptance with God in this world, through the same all-sufficient blood and righteousness ; for he *appears in the holy of holies, in heaven itself, in the presence of God for us* ; *Heb. ix. 24.* He secures all the glories and blessings of spiritual and eternal life for us, as he has taken possession of them in our name.

3. Our life of grace, and especially our life of glory, may be said to be hidden with Christ, because he dwells in heaven, where God resides in glory ; God, in whom is our life. He is set down on the right-hand of the Majesty on high ; *Heb. xii. 2.* There our eternal life is. The things which are above, are the objects of our joyful hope, *where Christ is at the right-hand of God* ; *Col. iii. 1.* It is the short, but sublime description of our heaven, that we shall be *present with the Lord*, we shall be where Christ is, to *behold his glory* ; *2 Cor. v. 8.* and *John xvii. 24.* And we shall possess all this unknown and rich variety of blessings which are reserved for us in heavenly places, whither Christ our Lord is ascended. Thus I have endeavored to explain, in the largest and most comprehensive sense,

what we are to understand by the life of a Christian hidden with Christ in God: it is reserved in the all-sufficiency, the purposes, and the engagements of God, under the care of the Mediator, and in the presence of Christ.

The use I shall make of this doctrine, is, to draw four inferences from it for our instruction, and three for our consolation.

The inferences for our instruction are such as these :

1st Instruction. What a glorious person is the poorest, meanest Christian! He lives by communion with God the Father and the Son; for his life is hid with Christ in God; *1 John i. 3.*—*Truly our fellowship is with the Father, and with his Son Jesus Christ. And these things write we unto you, that your joy may be full;* the joy that you may justly derive from so glorious an advancement.

A true Christian does not live upon the creatures, but upon the infinite and Almighty Creator; upon God who created all things by Jesus Christ. Created beings were never designed to be his life and his happiness; they are too mean and coarse a fare for a Christian to feed upon, in order to support his best life: He converses with them indeed, and transacts many affairs that relate to them in this lower world: while he dwells in flesh and blood, his heavenly Father has appointed these to be a great part of his business; but he does not make them his portion and his life. They possess but the lower degrees of his affection: He rejoices in the possession of them, as though he rejoiced not; and he weeps for the loss of them, as though he wept not: He enjoys the dearest comforts of life as though he had them not; and buys with such a holy indifference, as though he were not to possess; *1 Cor. vii. 29, 30.* for the fashion of them passes away: but the food of his life is infinite and immortal. It is no wonder that a man of this world lets loose all the powers of his soul in the pursuit and enjoyment of creatures, for they are his portion and his life. But it is quite otherwise with a Christian; he has a nobler original, and sustains a higher character: his divine life must have divine food to support it.

Let our thoughts take a turn to some bare common, or to the side of a wood, and visit the humble Christian there; we shall find him cheerful, perhaps, at his dinner of herbs, with all the circumstances of meanness around him: but what a glorious life he leads in that straw-cottage, and pure obscurity! The great and gay world shut him out from them with disdain: He lives, as it were, hidden in a cave of the earth; but the Godhead dwells with him there. The high and lofty one that inhabits eternity, comes down to dwell with the humble and contrite soul; *Isa. lvii. 15.* God,

who is the spring of life, comes down to communicate fresh supplies of this life continually. *He that dwelleth in love dwelleth in God*; 1 John iv. 16. He is not alone, for the Father is with him; John xvi. 32. The Father and the Son come and manifest themselves unto him, within the walls of that hovel, in so divine a manner, as they never do to the men of this world, in their robes and palaces; John xiv. 22, 23. And that ye may have the honor of the presence of the blessed Trinity, his *body is the temple of the Holy Ghost*; 1 Cor. iii. 16. and vi. 19. O! the wonderful condescensions of divine grace, and the surprising honors that are done to a humble saint! How is this habitation graced! Heaven is there, for God and Christ are there; and who knows what heavenly guards surround him? What flights of attending angels? *Are they not all ministering spirits, sent down to minister unto them that shall be heirs of salvation?* Heb. i. 14. But our Lord Jesus Christ is now unseen, God and angels are unseen; the Christian's company belong to the invisible world: he lives a hidden, but a divine life; his life is hid with Christ in God.

2d Instruction. See how it comes to pass that Christians are capable of doing such wonders, at which the world stands amazed. The spring of their life is almighty; it is hid in God. It is by this divine strength they subdue their sinful natures, their stubborn appetites and their old corrupt affections: it is by the power of God derived through Jesus Christ, they bend the powers of their souls unto a conformity to all the laws of God and grace; and they yield their bodies as instruments to the same holy service, while the world wonders at them, that they should fight against their own nature, and be able to overcome it too.

And as they deny themselves, in all the alluring instances of sinful pleasure, under the influence of almighty grace, so they endure sufferings, in the sharpest degree, from the hands of God, without murmuring. And when they have labored night and day, and performed surprizing services for God in the world, they are yet contented to submit to smarting and heavy trials from the hands of their heavenly Father, without being angry at their God; they know he loves them, and he designs all things shall work together for their good.

Besides all this, they bear dreadful persecutions, cruel mockings, and scourgings, and tortures, from the hands of men, and go through all the sorrows of martyrdom. What noble instances and miracles of this kind did the primitive age furnish us with, so that their tormentors were amazed! They saw not the secret springs of divine life which supported them; they knew not the grace of God, and

the power of Christ, by which the Christians were upheld in all their labors and their sufferings. The spring of their life was almighty, but it was hidden from the eyes of men: it was concealed and reserved with Christ in God.

Read the labors and the sufferings of St. Paul; 2 Cor. xi. 23. *In stripes above measure, in prisons frequent, in deaths often*: he was beaten with rods, he was stoned, he suffered shipwreck, in perpetual perils by land and sea, in weariness, in painfulness, in watchings and fastings, in hunger and thirst, in cold and nakedness. One would think his bones were iron, and his flesh were brass. He was invisibly supported by Christ the spring of his life. Read his wondrous virtues and self-denial; Phil. iv. 11, 12, 13. I know how to be abased, and how to abound; I can be full, and be hungry; I can possess plenty, and I can suffer want: I can do all things through Christ strengthening me. This was the fountain of his life and strength. I acknowledge, says he, in another place, that I am nothing, I have no sufficiency of myself to think so much as one good thought: But all my sufficiency is of God, in whom my life is hid; 2 Cor. iii. 5. And with what a devout zeal does he ascribe his life to Christ, in that glorious amassment of spiritual paradoxes! Gal. ii. 20. *I am crucified with Christ, nevertheless I live; yet, not I, but Christ liveth in me: and the life which I now live in the flesh, I live by the faith of the Son of God, who loved me, and gave himself for me.* Therefore I can be delivered to death daily for Jesus Christ's sake; troubled and perplexed, and yet not in despair; be cast down, and not be destroyed; because I believe that the life of Jesus must be made manifest in my mortal flesh, and he which raised up the Lord Jesus, shall raise us up also by Jesus, and shall present us with you; 2 Cor. iv. 14.

IIIId Instruction. See whither a dead sinner must go to attain spiritual and eternal life, and whither a decaying dying Christian must go for the recruit of his fainting life too: it is to God by Jesus Christ, for it is all hidden with Christ in God.

In vain shall a man who is dead in trespasses, toil and labor, and hope to attain life any other way. God is the spring of all life, and he has entrusted it to the hands of Jesus Christ; *I am the way, the truth, and the life*, says our Saviour; John xiv. 6. No man can have life without coming to the living Father; and no man cometh to the Father but by me. Seneca and Plato, with their moral lectures, and the writings of human philosophy, may give a man new garments, may make his outward life appear much better than before; they may teach him, in some measure, to govern his passions too, and subdue many of the fleshly appetites; but they can-

not raise him to the love of God, to the hatred of every sin, to the well-grounded hopes of the favor of God, the blessed expectation of a holy immortality, and a preparation for heaven. They cannot give the man a new life : he must be born again of the Spirit of Christ, or he can never become a living Christian.

And in vain would the poor backsliding Christian, with his withering decaying graces, recruit and renew his divine life, without applying himself afresh to Jesus Christ : while he forgets Christ, he must go on to wither and decay still. There is nothing in earth or in heaven can supply the utter absence of our Lord Jesus Christ. When the stream of spiritual life ebbs or runs low, it is not to be quickened, recovered, and increased, but by new supplies from the fountain which is on high. Remember, O degenerate Christian, remember whence it was you derived your first life, when you were once dead in trespasses and sins ; fly to the Saviour by new exercises of faith and dependence, mourning, in all humility, for your unwatchful walking, and your absence from the Lord. Commit your soul afresh to his care, exert your utmost powers, and beg of him renewed instances of the living Spirit, that the face of your soul may be like a watered garden, and the beauty of the divine life may be recovered again.

IVth Instruction. See the reason why a lively Christian desires and delights to be so much, and so often, where God and Christ are ; for his life is with them.

This was the divine temper and practice of the saints under a much darker dispensation than what we enjoy. How does the holy soul of David pant and long for the presence of God ! and he brings even his animal nature, the very ferments of his flesh and blood into his devotions ; *Psal. lxiii. 1. My soul thirsteth for thee, my flesh longeth for thee.* *Psal. lxxxiv. 2. My heart and my flesh crieth out for the living God.* In all the various and fervent language of sacred passion and transport, he breathes after God, who is the strength of his life and his salvation ; *Psal. xxvii. 1. The Jewish saints cleaved to the Lord, for he was their life, and the length of their days ; Deut. xxx. 20.*

And what sweet delight does St. Paul take in mentioning the very name of Christ ! How does he dwell upon it in long sentences, and loves to repeat the blessed sound ! How often does he rejoice in the hope of dwelling with him hereafter, and persuades the Colossians, in this context, to be much with him here ; *ver. 1. If ye are risen with Christ, and have derived a quickening virtue from him to work a divine life in you, let your affections ascend above, where Christ your life is.*

Is not a man, whose very soul and life is wrapped up in honor and ambition, desirous ever to be near the court ? His life flourishes under the sunshine of the prince's eye, and therefore he would fain dwell there. Does not the covetous wretch love to be near his hoards of gold or silver ? He has put up his life in his bags, among his treasures, and he is not willing to be far distant, nor long separated from them. Whatever a man lives upon, he would willingly be ever near it, so that he may have the pleasure of feeding upon what is his greatest delight, and be refreshed and nourished by that which he feels to support him. Now, what honor is to the ambitious, what money is to the covetous, what all the various delights of sense are to the men of carnal pleasure ; that is God to the saint, that is Christ Jesus to the Christian ; and therefore he is ever desirous of such further manifestations of God and Christ, that may invigorate his spiritual life, and give him the pleasing relish of living. Then a man feels that he lives, when he is near to the spring of his life, and derives fresh supplies from it every moment.

Thence it is, that in every distress or danger, the saints fly to God for refuge and relief : He is their great *hiding-place* ; Psalm xxxii. 7. And Christ Jesus is represented in prophecy under the same character ; Isa. xxxii. 2. This man, in whom the *Godhead dwells bodily*, shall be a hiding-place from the wind, and a covert from the tempest. The name of God in Christ, *is a strong tower ; the righteous run into it*, to hide themselves, and are safe ; Prov. xviii. 10. Their life is in God, in the keeping of Christ, and they can defy deaths and dangers, when their faith is strong, and their thoughts are fixed above.

They know the meaning of that tender and divine language ; Isa. xxvi. 20. *Come, my people, enter thou into thy chambers, and shut thy doors about thee ; hide thyself, as it were, for a little moment, until the indignation be overpast.* In a time of public terror, and spreading desolation, they retire to their secret places of converse with God, and are secured, at least from the terror, if not from the destruction too. When the arrows of death fly thick around them by day, and the pestilence walks through the streets in darkness, when a thousand fall at their side, and ten thousand at their right-hand, they make the Lord their refuge, even the most high their habitation, and dwell at ease in his secret place. He covers them from evil, or he gives them courage, so that they are not afraid : they place themselves under the protection of his name ; they find shelter in his attributes : these are their secret chambers ; they hide within the curtains of his covenant, they wrap their souls,

as it were, in a sheet, or rather in a volume of promises;\* that ancient volume that has secured the saints in all ages; and though death be near them, they know that their better life is safe: he gives his angels charge over them, to keep them on earth, or to bear them up to heaven, where their life is; *Psal. xci. 11, 12.*

Thence it comes to pass that we see Christians, searching after God in ordinances, and seeking for the Lord Jesus Christ in sermons, in prayers, in the closet, and in the sanctuary; for they live upon him. A holy soul pursues after the presence of his God, and his Saviour, with the same zeal of affection and fervent desire, that the men of this world indulge in their pursuit of created good: *My soul followeth hard after thee*; Psalm lxiii. 8. Carnal persons are contented to be absent from God, for he is not their life: they can satisfy themselves with a shew of religion, without the power of it; and with empty forms of ordinance, without Christ in them, because they are not born again, their life is not spiritual. The sinner lives upon visible creatures, and these awaken his warmest affections. A saint lives upon hidden and invisible things, upon the hopes of futurity, and upon the glories that are concealed in the promises: he lives upon the righteousness and the intercession of Jesus his Mediator, upon the strength and grace of Christ, who is his head in heaven; upon the word, the promise, and the all-sufficiency of a God; and therefore these are objects of his meditation and his desire.

I proceed now to the three inferences for our consolation.

1st Consolation. If our life be hidden with God, and our Lord Jesus Christ, then it is in safe hands. The wisdom and mercy of God have joined together, to appoint, shall I say, such a secret repository for our spiritual life, that it might be for ever secure. What can we have, or what can we desire more for the safety of our best life, than that God himself should undertake to reserve it in himself for us, and appoint his own eternal Son, in our nature, to be the great Trustee, and Surety, for his exhibition of it in every proper season?

Our original life was hid in the first Adam; it was intrusted with man, poor, feeble, inconstant man, and he lost it: He was of *the earth, earthly*, and our life with him goes down to the dust. Our new life is entrusted with Christ; it is hidden in God, who is almighty and unchangeable; and therefore can never be lost. The second Adam is *the Lord from heaven*, a quickening spirit; *1 Cor. xv. 45, &c.* And *he that believeth on him, though he were dead in*

\* The Bible, of old, was written on several sheets of parchment tacked together, and rolled up in a volume.

nature, yet shall he live by grace, for *Christ is the resurrection and the life*: And if he be once made spiritually alive by Christ, he shall live for ever. This is the language of Christ himself; *John xi. 25, 26.*

What an unreasonable thing is it then for a Christian to fear what man or devils can do against him, for they cannot hurt his best life! It is above the reach of all the assaults of earth or hell. Our Lord Jesus teaches us not to be afraid of them who only can kill the body; for the soul is not in their reach; nor is it possible for them to prevent the body from partaking of its share in the glorious life appointed for a Christian at the great rising-day.

We see here upon what firm grounds the doctrine of a Christian's perseverance is built; Christ is his life, *Jesus the same yesterday, to-day and for ever*. The all-sufficient God, and his eternal Son, have undertaken for the security of it; *John x. 28, 29, 30. I give unto them eternal life, and they shall never perish, neither shall any pluck them out of my hand. My Father which gave them me, is greater than all, and none is able to pluck them out of my Father's hand. I and my Father are one.* God hath sworn by his holiness, that the seed of Christ shall endure for ever; *Psalm lxxxix. 35, 36.* and that his loving kindness shall not be utterly taken away from his own children: and our Lord Jesus Christ doth little less than swear to the perseverance of his disciples, when he says; *John xiv. 19. Because I live, ye shall live also:* for, as I live, is the oath of God.

Why art thou cast down, O believer, and why is thy soul disquieted within thee? Hope in God thy life, for thou shalt yet praise him, how many and great soever thine adversaries are, and how difficult soever thy path and duty may be, and how loud soever thy foes threaten thy destruction. There may be many things in thy travels through this world, that may hurt or hinder the growth of thy spiritual life, and may for a season interpose, as it were, between thee and thy God; but neither life, nor death, nor principalities, nor powers, nor things present, nor things to come, shall ever separate thee entirely from him, whose love is secured in Jesus Christ; *Rom. viii. 38, 39.* The disciples were much to blame, that they were overwhelmed with terror in the midst of the storm, while Jesus Christ was with them in the same ship; and ye should chide your own souls, when you feel yourselves under such unbelieving fears as our Lord Jesus Christ chid in his fearful followers: "O ye of little faith, wherefore did ye doubt?"

IIId Consolation. What a comfortable thought must it be to a poor feeble Christian, that God and Christ know all the state of his

spiritual life? for it is hid with them. Though the life of a saint has a cloud upon it, though it is entirely hidden from men, and sometimes too much hidden from himself too, yet the Father and the Saviour know every circumstance of it, how low it is, how feeble, what daily obstacles it meets with, what hourly enemies assault it. Christ our Lord well knows when our life is in danger, and what are the necessary supplies.

This is very encouraging to a poor trembling believer, when he hardly knows how to address the throne of grace himself in such a manner, as to represent all his wants, and all his spiritual sorrows and difficulties to God in prayer; but our Lord Jesus Christ, who is a compassionate High-priest, who is our head, and near akin to us his members, is perfectly acquainted with our state: And the Christian, mourning under the decays of grace, can look up to Christ with hope, he can mingle new exercises of faith and dependence, among his sighs and his groans, and commit his case afresh to Jesus his Saviour, with a humble and a holy acquiescence in him. Christ himself, who is the believer's life, must know, and will take care of all affairs which relate to his spiritual and eternal welfare.

It is a matter of sweet consolation too, when a humble Christian, who walks carefully before God, is reproached by the world for a deceiver and a hypocrite, that he can appeal to God, with whom his life is hid, and say, "My record is on high; though my friends, or my enemies, may scorn or deride me, yet he knoweth the way that I take, and the secret exercises of my hidden life; He knows my longings and breathings of soul after him, and that nothing but his love can satisfy me: He knows my diligence and my holy labor to please him: He knows the wrestlings and the conflicts that I go through hourly, to maintain my close walking with my God: He knows that I live, though it is but a feeble life; and the charges of the world against me are false and malicious." It is with a relish of holy pleasure that the Christian sometimes, in secret, appeals to our Lord Jesus Christ, as Peter did, and says, *Lord, thou who knowest all things, knowest that I love thee;* John xxi. 17.

III Consolation. It is a matter of unspeakable comfort to a Christian, that the most terrible things to a sinner, are become the greatest blessings to a saint: And these are death and judgment. What can be more dreadful to those who know not God than those two words are; for they put an eternal end to all their present pleasures, and to all their hopes? But what greater happiness can a saint wish or hope for, than death and judgment will put him in possession of? The one carries his soul upward where his life is,

that is, to God and Christ in heaven ; the other brings his life down to earth, where his body is, for Christ shall then come to raise his dust from the grave.

I confess, I finished my former discussion on this text, with a meditation on death and judgment ; how the gloom which hung around the saint in this life, is all dispelled at this blessed hour ; and he who was unknown and despised among men, stands forth with honor amongst admiring angels : His hidden manner of life is for ever at an end. But in this discourse the secret and glorious springs of his life, *viz.* God and Christ, will naturally lead us to the same delightful meditations of futurity, as the hidden manner of it has done ; and there is so rich a variety of new and transporting scenes and ideas attending that subject, that I have no need to tire you with unpleasing repetition, though I resume the glorious theme.

Let my consolations proceed then, and let the saints rejoice.

At the moment of death the soul may say, " Farewell, for ever, sins, and sorrows, and perplexities ; farewell, temptations of the alluring, and the affrighting kind : neither the vanities, nor the terrors of this world, shall reach me any more ; for I shall from this moment for ever dwell where my joy, my life is. All my springs are in God, and I shall be for ever with him." And when the morning of the resurrection dawns upon the world, and the day of judgment appears, the body of a Christian shall be called out of the dust, and shall bid farewell for ever to death and darkness ; to disease and pain, to all the fruits of sin, and all the effects of the curse. Christ, who is the resurrection and the life, stands up as a complete conqueror over all the powers of the grave : He bids the sacred dust arise and live ; the dust obeys and revives ; the whole saint appears exulting in life ; the date of his immortality then begins, and his life shall run on to everlasting ages.

Methinks such lively views of death should incline us rather to desire to depart from the body, that we may dwell with Christ. Death is but the flight of the soul where its divine life is. Why should we make it a matter of fear then, to be absent from the body, if we are immediately present with the Lord ? Methinks, under the influence of such meditations of the resurrection, faith should breathe, and long for the last appearance of Christ, and rejoice in the language of holy Job : *I know that my Redeemer liveth, and that he shall stand at the latter day upon the earth ;* Job xix. 25. A Christian should send his hopes and his wishes forward to meet the chariot-wheels of our Lord Jesus the Judge ; for the day of his appearance is but the display of our life, and the per-

fection of our blessedness. *When Christ, who is our life shall appear, then shall we also appear with him in glory;* Col. iii. 4. My thoughts kindle at the sound of that blessed promise, and I long to let contemplation loose on a theme so divinely glorious. If ever the pomp of language be indulged, and the magnificence of words, it must be to display this bright solemnity, this illustrious appearance, which outshines all the pomp of words, and the utmost magnificence of language. Come, my friends, let us meditate the sacred conformity of the saints to Christ, first in their hidden, and then in their glorious life; as he was on earth, so are they; both hated of the world, both unknown in it. The disciples must be trained up for public honors, as their Master was, in this hideous and howling wilderness, in caves of darkness, or rather in a den of savages. They must follow the Captain of their salvation through a thousand dangers and sufferings; and they shall receive their crown too, and a glory like that which arrays their divine Leader.

O may I never think it hard to trace the footsteps of my Lord, though it may be in a miry, or a thorny way! May I never repine at poverty and meanness of circumstance in my present pilgrimage! nor think it strange if the world scorn and abuse me, or if Satan, the foul spirit, should assault and buffet me sorely! Dare I hope to appear in glory, when Christ, who is my life, appears; and can I not bear to attend him in sufferings and shame? Am I better than my blessed Lord? What poor attendants had the Son of God, at his first entrance into our world! How mean was every thing that belonged to him on earth! What vile and despicable raiment, unworthy of the Prince of glory! What coarse provision, and sorry furniture, to entertain incarnate Godhead! And how impious was the treatment he found among men, and impudent temptations from the same foul spirit! He had snares, sorrows, and temptations, watching all around him: the sorrows of death compassed him about, and the powers of darkness crowded him with their envious assaults; earth and hell were at once engaged against him; they hung him bleeding on a cursed and infamous tree, lifted on high to be made a more public gazing-stock, and an object of wider scorn! Blessed Saviour! how divine was thy patience to endure all these indignities, and not call for thy Father's legions, nor thy own thunder!

But, this was the hour of thy appointed combat, the place of thy voluntary obscurity, and the season of thy hidden life; and thy saints must bear thy resemblance in both worlds. How unspeakable were thy past sorrows! and thy present glories all unspeakable! How infinitely different were these dark and mournful scenes, from

the joys and honors thou hast purchased by those very sufferings ! Sacred honors and joys without alloy, which thou art now possessed of as their great forerunner, and hast made ready for thy subjects in thy own kingdom ! What robes of light shall array thy followers in that day ; what bright planet, or brighter star, shall be the place of their dwelling ? or shall all those shining worlds be mansions of various residence, as thou shalt lead thy saints successively through the vast and numerous provinces of thy boundless dominion ? Sorrow, sin, and temptation shall be named no more, unless to triumph over them in immortal songs. The fairest spirits of light, in their own heavenly forms, shall be the companions and attendants of the children of God. Jesus, the Lord of glory, is their king and head, the leader of their triumph, and the pattern of their exaltation. Jesus shall appear in his meridian lustre, as the Sun of Righteousness in the noon of heaven ; yet the beams of his influence shall be gentle as the morning-star. There needs no other sun in that upper world ; the Lamb is the light thereof. Jesus, the ornament of paradise, and the delight of God, shall be the eternal and beatific object of their senses, and their souls ; they must be *where he is, to behold his glory.*

The blessed God shall dwell among them, and lay out upon them the riches of his own all-sufficiency ; riches of wisdom, grace and power, all-surprising, and all-infinite. Divine power shall then reveal all the glory that has been laid up for them, of old, in the purposes of God, or in the promises of the book of life. But it was fit it should be hidden there, while the time of their probation lasted ; it was fit they should live by faith, and under some degrees of darkness, while the ages of sin and temptation were rolling away : it was divinely proper that eternal life should not break forth, nor the splendors of the third heaven be made too conspicuous, till the six thousand years of mortality and death had finished their revolutions round the lower skies, and had answered the scheme of divine counsel and judgment, on a world where sin had entered.

But life and heaven must not be hid for ever. The almighty word, in that day, shall bid the ancient decree bring forth, and the promise unfold itself in public light. What new worlds of unseen felicity ! What scenes of delight, and celestial blessings, never yet revealed to the race of Adam ! when the rivers of pleasure, that had run under ground from the earth's foundation, shall break up in immortal fountains !

Mercy and truth shall lavish out upon men with an unsparing hand all those treasures of life which were hid in God, and in the gospel for them. The All-wise shall please himself in making so

noble creatures out of so mean materials, dust and ashes. Glorified saints are master-pieces of divine skill ; and the blessed original, or first exemplar of them, the man Jesus, is the perfection of the contrivance of God ; here he has abounded in all wisdom and prudence. Then the inhabitants of upper worlds shall see an illustrious and holy creation, rising out of the ruins of this wretched globe, involved all in guilt, and weltering in penal fire. When this scene opens, what sounding acclamations shall echo from world to world, and new universal honors be paid to Divine Wisdom ! The morning-stars shall sing together again, and those holy armies shout for joy. The grace of God descending to earth, in days past, had in some measure prepared his children for glory : but in that day he shall enlarge their capacities, both of sense and of mind, to an inconceivable extent, and shall fill the powers of their glorified nature with the fruits of his love, new and old.

And what if the limits of our capacity shall be for ever stretching themselves on all sides, and for ever drinking in larger measures of glory ; what an astonishing state of ever-growing pleasure ! What an eternal advance of our heaven ! The Godhead is an infinite ocean of life and blessedness, and finite vessels may be for ever swelling, and for ever filling in that sea of all-sufficiency. There must be no tiresome satiety in that everlasting entertainment. God shall create the joys of his saints ever fresh : he shall throw open his endless stores of blessing, unknown even to the first rank of angels : and feast the sons and daughters of men with pleasures akin to those which were prepared for the Son of God. For verily he took not upon him the nature of angels, but the likeness of sinful flesh : and when he shall appear the second time without sin to our salvation, we shall then be made like him, for we shall see him as he is. *Amen.*



MISCELLANEOUS THOUGHTS.  
POEMS.



## MISCELLANEOUS THOUGHTS.

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### A MEDITATION FOR THE FIRST OF MAY.

WHAT astonishing variety of artifices, what innumerable millions of exquisite works, is the God of nature engaged in every moment ! How gloriously are his all-pervading wisdom and power employed in this useful season of the year, this spring of nature ! What infinite myriads of vegetable beings is he forming this very moment, in their roots and branches, in their leaves and blossoms, their seeds and fruit ! Some indeed begun to discover their bloom amidst the snows of January, or under the rough cold blasts of March : Those flowers are withered and vanished in April, and their seeds are now ripening to perfection. Others are shewing themselves this day in all their blooming pride and beauty ; and while they adorn the gardens and meadows, with gay and glowing colors, they promise their fruits in the days of harvest. The whole nation of vegetables is under the divine care and culture, his hand forms them day and night with admirable skill and unceasing operation, according to the natures he first gave them, and produces their buds and foliage, their flowery blossoms, and rich fruit in their appointed months : Their progress in life is exceeding swift at this season of the year ; and their successive appearances, and sweet changes of raiment are visible almost hourly.

But these creatures are of lower life, and give but feebler displays of the Maker's wisdom. Let us raise our contemplations another story, and survey a nobler theatre of divine wonders. What endless armies of animals is the hand of God moulding and figuring this moment throughout his brutal dominions ! What immense flights of little birds are now fermenting in the egg, heaving and growing towards shape and life ! What vast flocks of four-footed creatures, what droves of large cattle are now framed in their early embryos, imprisoned in the dark cells of nature ! and others perhaps are moving toward liberty, and just preparing to see the light. What unknown myriads of insects in their various cradles and nesting-places are now working toward vitality and motion ! and thou-

sands of them with their painted wings just beginning to unfurl and expand themselves into fluttering and day-light ; while other families of them have forsaken their husky beds, and exult and glitter in the warm sun-beams !

An exquisite world of wonders is complicated even in the body of every little insect, an ant, a gnat, a mite, that is scarce visible to the naked eye. Admirable engines ! which a whole academy of philosophers could never contrive ; which the nation of poets hath neither art nor colors to describe ; nor has a world of mechanics skill enough to frame the plainest, or coarsest of them. Their nerves, their muscles, and the minute atoms which compose the fluids fit to run in the little channels of their veins, escape the notice of the most sagacious mathematician, with all his aid of glasses. The active powers and curiosity of human nature are limited in their pursuit, and must be content to lie down in ignorance.—“Hitherto shall ye go, and no further.”

It is a sublime and constant triumph over all the intellectual powers of man, which the great God maintains every moment in these inimitable works of nature, in these impenetrable recesses and mysteries of divine art ! And the month of May is the most shining season of this triumph. The flags and banners of almighty wisdom are now displayed round half the globe, and the other half waits the return of the sun, to spread the same triumph over the southern world. This very sun in the firmament is God’s prime minister in this wondrous world of beings, and he works with sovereign vigor on the surface of the earth, and spreads his influences deep under the clods to every root and fibre, moulding them into their proper forms, by divine direction. There is not a plant, nor a leaf, nor one little branching thread, above or beneath the ground, that escapes the eye or influence of this beneficent star : An illustrious emblem of the omnipresence and universal activity of the Creator.

But has this all-wise Creator, this supreme Lord of all nature, no intellectual prime minister at all in these his dominions ? Has he delegated all his powers to that bulky globe of fire which we call the sun, that inanimate and unthinking mass of matter ? Is this huge burning and senseless body commissioned to penetrate every dark cranny of nature either with its light or heat, and to animate every atom in the vegetable and animal kingdoms ; and yet no intellectual being, no spirit so much a-kin to God, as to be favored with the like extensive vicegerency ? Though the light of reason does not tell his name, yet has not revelation informed us ? Yes, surely, there is a man after God’s own heart, the fairest image of

the Creator, and nearest a-kin to him, among all the works of his hands : There is a man, and his name is Jesus, who holds most intimate and personal union with the Godhead, in whom all divine wisdom dwells bodily, and to his care has the Father committed all the infinite varieties of the vegetable and animal worlds. By him are all these wonders produced in the course of providence, as by an under-agent in the kingdom of nature. Is not the government of heaven and earth put into his hands : Is he not made Lord of principalities and powers, of men, angels, and devils, and of all their works ? And can we think that he has been denied the government of the lower parts of his Father's workmanship ? Does he not manage all things in the world of grace ? Surely then we may infer, he rules us wisely and as spaciously in the upper and lower regions of the creation, as an intellectual and conscious instrument of the providence of his Father, God. "My Father worketh hitherto, and I work. I and my Father are one. And every creature which is in heaven, and on the earth, and under the earth, and such as are in the sea, and all that are in them, heard I saying, Blessing and honor, and glory and power, be to him that sitteth upon the throne, and to the Lamb for ever and ever." *Amen.*

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### DIVINE GOODNESS IN THE CREATION.

THOSE authors have been very entertaining to me, who have taken a survey of the wisdom of God in the works of nature ; such are the reverend and pious Mr. Ray, in his treatise on that subject ; Mr. Derham, in his two volumes written on that divine theme ; and the Archbishop of Cambray, in his Demonstration of the Existence of God. But I do not remember to have read in those authors this one instance of the wide-spreading diffusion of divine goodness through this lower world, namely, that the most universal and conspicuous appearances both of the earth and sky, are designed for the convenience, the profit and pleasure of all the animal creation : All that we see above us, and all beneath us, is suited to our nourishment or to our delight.

What is more necessary for the support of life, than food ? Behold the earth is covered with it all round ; grass, herbs and fruits for beasts and men, were ordained to overspread all the surface of the ground, so that an animal could scarce wander anywhere, but his food was near him. Amazing provision for such an immense family !

What is more joyful than the light? "Truly the light is sweet," says the wisest of men, "and a pleasant thing it is to behold the light of the sun." See the whole circuit of the heavens is replein-  
ished with sun-beams, so that while the day lasts, wheresoever the eye is placed, it is surrounded with this enjoyment: it drinks in the easy and general blessing, and is thereby entertained with all the particular varieties of the creation. It is light conveys to our notice all the riches of the divine workmanship; without it nature would be a huge and eternal blank, and her infinite beauties for ever unknown.

Again; What are the sweetest colors in nature, the most delightful to the eye, and most refreshing too? Surely the green and the blue claim this pre-eminence. Common ex-  
perience, as well as philosophy, tells us, that bodies of blue and green colors send us such rays of light to our eyes, as are least hurtful or offensive; we can endure them longest; Whereas the red and the yellow, or orange color, send more uneasy rays in abundance, and give greater confusion and pain to the eye; they dazzle it sooner, and tire it quickly with a little intent gazing; therefore the divine goodness dressed all the heavens in blue, and the earth in green. Our habitation is overhung with a canopy of most beautiful azure, and a rich verdant pavement is spread under our feet, that the eye may be pleased and easy wheresoever it turns itself, and that the most universal objects it has to con-  
verse with might not impair the spirits, and make the sense weary.

### I.

When God the new-made world survey'd,  
His word pronounc'd the building good;  
Sun-beams and light the heav'ns array'd,  
And the whole earth was crown'd with food.

### II.

Colors that charm and ease the eye,  
His pencil spread all nature round;  
With pleasing blue he arch'd the sky,  
And a green carpet dress'd the ground.

### III.

Let envious atheists ne'er complain  
That nature wants or skill, or care;  
But turn their eyes all round in vain,  
T' avoid their Maker's goodness there.

## DISTANT THUNDER.

WHEN we hear the thunder rumbling in some distant quarter of the heavens, we sit calm and secure amidst our business or diversions, we feel no terrors about us, and apprehend no danger. When we see the slender streaks of lightning play afar off in the horizon of an evening sky, we look on and amuse ourselves as with an agreeable spectacle, without the least fear or concern. But, lo, the dark cloud rises by degrees, it grows as black as night, and big with tempest; it spreads as it rises to the mid-heaven, and now hangs directly over us; the flashes of lightning grow broad and strong, and like sheets of ruddy fire, they blaze terribly all round the hemisphere. We bar the doors, and windows, and every avenue of light, but we bar them all in vain; the flames break in at every cranny, and threaten swift destruction. The thunder follows, bursting from the cloud with sudden and tremendous clashes; the voice of the Lord is redoubled with violence, and overwhelms us with terror; it rattles over our heads as though the whole house were broken down at once with a stroke from heaven, and were tumbling on us a main to bury us in the ruins. Happy the soul whose hope in his God composes all his passions amidst these storms of nature, and renders his whole deportment peaceful and serene amidst the frights and hurries of weak spirits and unfortified minds.

What lesson shall we derive from such a scene as this? Methinks I see here in what manner the terrors of the book of God and the threatenings of divine vengeance are received and entertained by secure sinners. These threatenings appear to them like streaks of lightning afar off: The most dreadful predictions of the fury of God sound in their ears but like the feeble murmurs of the sky, and far distant thunder. The poor among mankind go on to pursue their labors of life, and the rich their vain amusements; they have no fear about these future storms afar off, nor any solicitude to avoid them. But the hour is hastening when every threatening in the Bible shall appear to be the voice of God, and his power shall employ all the terrible things in the creation for the accomplishment of his dreadful word. The wings of time bring onward the remote tempest: These dark clouds unite and grow big with divine and eternal vengeance; they rise high, they hang over the nations, and are just ready to be discharged on the head of impenitents. The God of thunder will roar from heaven, and cause his voice to be heard through the foundations of the earth, and to the very centre of hell. The spirit of the haughtiest sinner shall tremble with un-

known astonishment, and the man of mockery shall quiver to his very soul. The lightnings of God shall kindle the world into one vast conflagration ; the earth with all its forests and cities, shall make a dreadful blaze ; the enemies of the Lord shall be fuel for this devouring fire, and a painful burning shall be kindled in the consciences, which innumerable ages shall not extinguish. “Who can dwell with this devouring fire ? Who can endure these everlasting burnings ?”

Blessed souls, who in a wise and happy hour have heard these divine warnings, who stood in awe of these distant thunders, and revered and obeyed the voice of the Lord in them. Blessed souls, who beheld the flashes of the wrath of God while they were yet afar off ; who saw them kindling terribly in the threatenings of the broken law, and fled for refuge to the hope set before them in the gospel ! They are divinely secured amidst the promises of the covenant of grace, from all the approaches of the fiery indignation. Jesus has sprinkled his own blood upon them ; a sovereign and preventive remedy against these terrors, a sure and eternal defence against the power of the destroying angel, and the burning tempest. “Their feet shall stand on high, their habitation is a munition of rocks ;” they shall live secure, and rejoice in their God amidst the ruins of the lower creation.

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### VANITY INSCRIBED ON ALL THINGS.

TIME, like a long-flowing stream, makes haste into eternity, and is for ever lost and swallowed up there ; and while it is hastening to its period, it sweeps away all things with it which are not immortal. There is a limit appointed by Providence to the duration of all the pleasant and desirable scenes of life, to all the works of the hands of men, with all the glories and excellencies of animal nature, and all that is made of flesh and blood. Let us not dote upon any thing here below, for heaven hath inscribed vanity upon it. The moment is hastening when the decree of heaven shall be uttered, and Providence shall pronounce upon every glory of the earth, “Its time shall be no longer.”

What is that stately building, that princely palace, which now entertains and amuses our sight with ranks of marble columns and wide-spreading arches, that gay edifice which enriches our imagination with a thousand royal ornaments, and a profusion of gay and glittering furniture ? Time, and all its circling hours, with a swift

wing are brushing it away ; decay steals upon it insensibly, and a few years hence it shall lie in mouldering ruin and desolation. Unhappy possessor, if he has no better inheritance !

What are those fine and elegant gardens, those delightful walks, those gentle ascents and soft declining slopes which raise and sink the eye by turns to a thousand vegetable pleasures ? How lovely are those sweet borders, and those growing varieties of bloom and fruit which recal lost paradise to mind ! Those living parterres which regale the sense with vital fragrancy and make glad the sight by their refreshing verdure and entertaining flowery beauties ? The scythe of time is passing over them all ; they wither, they die away, they drop and vanish into dust ; their duration is short ; a few months deface all their yearly glories ; and within a few years perhaps all these rising terrace-walks, these gentle verging declivities, shall lose all order and elegance, and become a rugged heap of ruins : Those well-distinguished borders and parterres shall be levelled in confusion, and thrown into common earth again for the ox and the ass to graze upon them. Unhappy man, who possesses this agreeable spot of ground, if he has no paradise more durable than this !

And no wonder that these labors of the hands of men should perish, when even the works of God are perishable.

What are these visible heavens, these lower skies, and this globe of earth ? They are indeed the glorious workmanship of the Almighty ; but they are waxing old and waiting their period too, when the angel shall pronounce upon them, "That time shall be no more. The heavens shall be folded up as a vesture ; the elements of the lower world shall melt with fervent heat, and the earth and all the works thereof shall be burnt up with fire." May the imperishable world be but my portion, and the heaven of heavens my inheritance, which is built for an eternal mansion for the sons of God : These buildings shall outlive time and nature, and exist through unknown ages of felicity.

What have we mortals to be proud of in our present state, when every human glory is so fugitive and fading ? Let the brightest and the best of us say to ourselves, "That we are but dust and vanity."

Is my body formed upon a graceful model ? Are my limbs well turned, and my complexion better colored than my neighbors' ? Beauty even in perfection is of shortest date ; a few years will inform me that its bloom vanishes, its flower withers, its lustre grows dim, its duration shall be no longer ; and if life be prolonged, yet the pride and glory of it is for ever lost in age and wrinkles : Or perhaps our vanity meets a speedier fate. Death and the grave with a sovereign and irresistible command, summon the brightest

as well as the coarsest pieces of human nature to lie down early in their cold embraces ; and at last they must all mix together among worms and corruption. *Aesop* the deformed, and *Helena* the fair, are lost and undistinguished in common earth. Nature in its gayest bloom is but a painted vanity.

Are my nerves well strung and vigorous ? Is my activity and strength far superior to my neighbors in the days of youth ? But youth hath its appointed limit : age steals upon it, unstrings the nerves, and makes the force of nature languish into infirmity and feebleness. *Samson* and *Goliah* would have lost their boasted advantages of stature and their brawny limbs in the course of half a century, though the one had escaped the sling of *David*, and the other the vengeance of his own hands in the ruin of *Dagon's* temple. Man in his best estate is a flying shadow and vanity.

Even those nobler powers of human life which seem to have something angelical in them, I mean the powers of wit and fancy, gay imagination, and capacious memory, they are all subject to the same laws of decay and death. What though they can raise and animate beautiful scenes in a moment, and, in imitation of creating power, can spread bright appearances and new worlds before the senses and the souls of their friends ? What though they can entertain the better part of mankind, the refined and polite world with high delight and rapture ? These scenes of rapturous delight grow flat and old by a frequent review, and the very powers that raised them grow feeble apace. What though they can give immortal applause and fame to their possessors ! It is but the immortality of an empty name, a mere succession of the breath of men ; and it is a short sort of immortality too, which must die and perish when this world perishes. A poor shadow of duration indeed, while the real period of these powers is hastening every day ; they languish and die as fast as animal nature, which has a large share in them, makes haste to its decay ; and the time of their exercise shall shortly be no more.

In vain the aged poet or the painter would call up the muse and genius of their youth, and summon all the arts of their imagination to spread and dress out some visionary scene : In vain the elegant orator would recal the bold and masterly figures, and all those flowery images which gave ardor, grace and dignity to his younger composure, and charmed every ear : They are gone, they are fled beyond the reach of their owner's call : Their time is past, they are vanished and lost beyond all hope of recovery.

The God of nature has pronounced an unpassable period upon all the powers and pleasures and glories of this mortal state. Let

us then be afraid to make any of them our boast or our happiness ; but point our affections to those diviner objects whose nature is everlasting ; let us seek those religious attainments and those new-created powers of a sanctified mind, concerning which it shall never be pronounced, "That their time shall be no longer."

O may every one of us be humbly content at the call of heaven to part with all that is pleasing or magnificent here on earth ; let us resign even these agreeable talents when the God of nature demands ; and when the hour arrives that shall close our eyes to all visible things, and lay our fleshly structure in the dust, let us yield up our whole selves to the hand of our Creator, who shall reserve our spirits with himself ; and while we cheerfully give up all that was mortal to the grave, we may lie down full of the joyful hope of a rising immortality. New and unknown powers and glories, brighter flames of imagination, richer scenes of wit and fancy, and diviner talents are preparing for us when we shall awake from the dust ; and the mind itself shall have all its faculties in a sublime state of improvement. These shall make us equal, if not superior, to angels, for we are nearer a-kin to the Son of God than they are, and therefore we shall be made more like him.

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## THE RAKE REFORMED IN THE HOUSE OF MOURNING.

FLORINO was young and idle ; he gave himself up to all the diversions of the town, and roved wild among the pleasures of sense ; nor did he confine himself within the limits of virtue, or withhold his heart from any forbidden joy. Often hath he been heard to ridicule marriage, and affirm that no man can mourn heartily for a dead wife, for then he hath leave by the law to choose a new companion, to riot in all the gayer scenes of a new courtship, and perhaps to advance his fortune too.

When he heard of the death of *Serena*, "Well," said he, "I will go visit my friend *Lucius*, and rally him a little on this occasion." He went the next day in all the wantonness of his heart to fulfil his design, inhuman and barbarous as it was, and to sport with solemn sorrow. But when *Lucius* appeared, the man of gaiety was strangely surprised, he saw such a sincere and inimitable distress sitting on his countenance, and discovering itself in every air and action, that he dropt his cruel purpose, his soul began to melt and he assumed the comforter.

*Florino's* methods of consolation were all drawn from two

topics : Some from fate and necessity, advising an heroic indolence about unavoidable events which are past and cannot be reversed ; and some were derived from the various amusements of life which call the soul abroad, and divide and scatter the thoughts, and suffer not the mind to attend to its inward anguish. "Come, *Lucius*," said he, " come, smooth your brows a little and brighten up for an hour or two : Come along with me to a concert this evening where you shall hear some of the best pieces of music that ever were composed, and performed by some of the best hands that ever touched an instrument. To-morrow I will wait on you to the play, or, if you please, to the new opera, where the scenes are so surprising and so gay, that they would almost tempt an old hermit from his beloved cell, and call back his years to three-and-twenty. Come, my friend, what have the living to do with the dead ? Do but forget your grievances a little and they will die too : Come, shake off the spleen, divert your heart with the entertainments of wit and melody, and call away your fancy from these gloomy and useless contemplations." Thus he ran on in his own way of talking, and opened to his mourning friend the best springs of comfort that he was acquainted with.

*Lucius* endured this prattle as long as he was able to endure it, but it had no manner of influence to stanch the bleeding wound or to abate his smarting sorrows. His pain waxed more intense by such sort of applications, and the grief soon grew too unruly to contain itself.

*Lucius* then asked leave to retire a litte; *Florino* followed him softly at a distance to the door of his closet, where indeed he observed not any of the rules of civility or just decency, but placed himself near enough to listen how the passion took its vent : And there he heard the distressed *Lucius* mourning over *Serena*'s death in such language as this :

What did *Florino* talk about ? Necessity and fate ? Alas, this is my misery, that so painful an event cannot be reversed, that the divine will has made it fate, and there is a necessity of my enduring it.

Plays and music and operas ! What poor trifles are these to give ease to a wounded heart ! To a heart that has lost its choicest half ! A heart that lies bleeding in deep anguish under such a keen parting stroke, and the long, long absence of my *Serena* ! She is gone. The desire of my eyes and the delight of my soul is gone.—The first of earthly comforts and the best of mortal blessings.—She is gone, and she has taken with her all that was pleasant, all that could brighten the gloomy hours of life, that could soften the cares

and relieve the burdens of it. She is gone, and the best portion and joy of my life is departed. Will she never return, never come back and bless my eyes again ? No ; never, never.—She will no more come back to visit this wretched world and to dry these weeping eyes. That best portion of my life, that dearest blessing is gone, and will return no more. Sorrows in long succession await me while I live ; all my future days are marked out for grief and darkness.

Let the man who feels no inward pain at the loss of such a partner, dress his dwelling in black shades and dismal formalities : Let him draw the curtains of darkness around him and teach his chambers a fashionable mourning : But real anguish of heart needs none of these modish and dissembled sorrows. My soul is hung round with dark images in all her apartments, and every scene is sincere lamentation and death.

I thought once I had some pretences to the courage of a man : But this is a season of untried distress : I now shudder at the thought, I start at shadows, my spirits are sunk, and horror has taken hold of me. I feel passions in me that were unknown before ; love has its own proper grief and its peculiar anguish. Mourning love has those agonies and those sinkings of spirit which are known only to bereaved and virtuous lovers.

I stalk about like a ghost in musing silence, till the gathering sorrow grows too big for the heart and bursts out into weak and unmanly wailings. Strange and overwhelming stroke indeed ! It has melted all the man within me down to softness. My nature is gone back to childhood again : I would maintain the dignity of my age and my sex, but these eyes rebel and betray me ; the eyelids are full, they overflow ; the drops of love and grief trickle down my cheeks, and plow the furrows of age there before their time.

How often in a day are these sluices opened afresh ? The sight of every friend that knew her calls up my weakness and betrays my frailty. I am quite ashamed of myself. What shall I do ? Is there nothing of manhood left about my heart ? I will resist the passion, I will struggle with nature, I will grow indolent and forbid my tears. Alas, poor feeble wretch that I am ! In vain I struggle ; in vain I resist : The assumed indolence vanishes ; the real passion works within, it swells and bears down all before it : The torrent rises and prevails hourly, and nature will have its way. Even the Son of God when he became Man, was found weeping at the tomb of a darling friend. Lazarus died and Jesus wept.

O my soul, what shall I do to relieve this heart-ache ? How shall I cure this painful sensibility ? Is there no opiate will reach it ? Whither shall I go to leave my sorrows behind me ? I wander

from one room to another, and wherever I go I still seem to seek her, but I miss her still. My imagination flatters me with her lovely image, and tempts me to doubt, is she dead indeed? My fond imagination would fain forget her death-bed, and impose upon my hope that I shall find her somewhere. I visit her apartment, I steal into her closet: in days past when I have missed her in the parlor, how often have I found the dear creature in that beloved corner of the house, that sweet place of divine retirement and converse with heaven? But even that closet is empty now. I go thither, and I retire in disappointment and confusion.

Methinks I should meet her in some of her walks, in some of her family cares or innocent amusements: I should see her face, methinks, I should hear her voice and exchange a tender word or two—Ah foolish rovings of a distressed and disquieted fancy! Every room is empty and silent; closet, parlors, chambers, all empty, all silent; and that very silence and emptiness proclaim my sorrows: even emptiness and deep silence join to confess the painful loss.

Shall I try then to put her quite out of my thought, since she will come no more within the reach of my senses? Shall I loosen the fair picture and drop it from my heart, since the fairer original is for ever gone? Go, then, fair picture, go from my bosom, and appear to my soul no more. Hard word! But it must be done: Go, depart thou dearest form; thou most lovely of images, go from my heart: thy presence is now too painful in that tender part of me. O unhappy word! Thy presence painful? A dismal change indeed! When thou wert wont to arise and shew thyself there, graces and joys were wont to arise and shew themselves: Graces and joys went always with her, nor did her image ever appear without them, till that dark and bitter day that spread the veil of death over her: But her image drest in that gloomy veil hath lost all the attendant joys and graces. Let her picture vanish from my soul then, since it has lost those endearing attendants: Let it vanish away into forgetfulness, for death has robbed it of every grace and every joy.

Yet stay a little there, tempting image, let me once more survey thee: Stay a little moment, and let me take one last glance, one solemn farewell. Is there not something in the resemblance of her too lovely still to have it quite banished from my heart? Can I set my soul at work to try to forget her? Can I deal so unkindly with one who would never have forgotten me? Can my soul live without her image on it? Is it not stamped there too deep ever to be effaced?

Methinks I feel all my heart-strings wrap around her, and grow

so fast to that dear picture in my fancy, they seem to be rooted there. To be divided from it is to die. Why should I then pursue so vain and fruitless an attempt? What! forget myself? forget my life? No; it cannot be; nor can I bear to think of such a rude and cruel treatment of an image so much deserving and so much beloved. Neither passion nor reason permits me to forget her, nor is it within my power. She is present almost to all my thoughts: She is with me in all my motions! grief has arrows with her name upon them, that stick as fast and as deep as those of love; they cleave to my vitals wheresoever I go, but with a quicker sensation and a keener pain. Alas it is love and grief together that have shot all their arrows into my heart, and filled every vein with acute anguish and long distress.

Whither then shall I fly to find solace and ease? I cannot depart from myself: I cannot abandon these tender and smarting sensations. Shall I quit the house and all the apartments of it which renew her dear memory? Shall I rove in these open fields which lie near my dwelling, and spread wide their pleasing verdure? Shall I give my soul a loose to all nature that smiles around me, or shall I confine my daily walk to this shady and delightful garden? Oh, no! neither of these will relieve my anguish. *Serena* has too often blessed me with her company both in this garden and in these fields. Her very name seems written on every tree: I shall think of her and fancy I see her in every step I take. Here she pressed the grass with her feet, here she gathered violets and roses and refreshing herbs, and gave the lovely collection of sweetness into my hand. But alas! the sweetest violet and the fairest rose is fallen, is withered, and is no more. Farewell then, ye fields and gardens, with all your varieties of green and flowery joys! Ye are all a desert, a barren wilderness, since *Serena* has for ever left you and will be seen there no more.

But can friends do nothing to comfort a mourner? Come, my wise friends, surround me and divert my cares with your agreeable conversation. Can books afford no relief? Come, my books, ye volumes of knowledge, ye labors of the learned dead; come, fill up my hours with some soothing amusement. I call my better friends about me, I fly to the heroes and the philosophers of ancient ages to employ my soul among them. But alas! neither learning nor books amuse me, nor green and smiling prospects of nature delight me, nor conversation with my wisest and best friends can entertain me in these dark and melancholy hours. Solitude, solitude in some unseen corner, some lonely grotto, overgrown with shades! This is my dearest choice; let me dwell in my beloved solitude where

none shall come near me ; midnight and solitude are the most pleasing things to a man who is weary of day-light and of all the scenes of this visible and busy world. I would eat and drink and dwell alone, though this lonesome humor sooths and gratifies the painful passion, and gives me up to the tyranny of my sharpest sorrows. Strange mixture that I am made of ! I mourn and grieve even to death, and yet I seem fond of nothing but grief and mourning.

Woe is me ! Is there nothing on earth can divert, nothing relieve me ? Then let my thoughts ascend to paradise and heaven, there I shall find her better part, and grief must not enter there. From this hour take a new turn, O my soul, and never think of *Serena* but as shining and rejoicing among the spirits of the blest, and in the presence of her God. Rise often in holy meditation to the celestial world, and betake thyself to more intense piety. Devotion has wings that will bear thee high above the tumults and passions of lower life : Devotion will direct and speed thy flight to a country of brighter scenes.

Shake off this earthliness of mind, this dust of mortality that hangs about thee ; rise upward often in an hour, and dwell much in those regions whither thy devout partner is gone : Thy better half is safely arrived there, and that world knows nothing but joy and love.

She is gone ; the prophets and the apostles and the best of departed souls have marked out her way to heaven : Bear witness ye apostles and holy prophets, the best of departed souls bear witness, that I am seeking to follow her in the appointed moment. Let the wheels of nature and time roll on apace in their destined way. Let suns and moons arise and set apace, and light a lonesome traveller onward to his home. Blessed Jesus, be thou my living leader ! Virtue, and the track of *Serena's* feet be my daily and delightful path. The track leads upwards to the regions of love and joy. How can I dare to wander from the path of virtue lest I lose that beloved track ? Remember, O my soul, her footsteps are found in no other road.

If my love to virtue should ever fail me, the steps of my *Serena* would mark out my way, and help to secure me from wandering. O may the kind influences of heaven descend from above and establish and guard my pious resolutions ! May the divine powers of religion be my continual strength, and the hope of eternal things my never-failing support, till I am dismissed from this prison of the flesh and called to ascend to the spirits of the just made perfect, till I bid adieu to all that is not immortal, and go dwell with my

God and my adored Saviour ; there shall I find my lost *Serena* again, and share with her the unutterable joys of paradise.

Here *Lucius* threw himself on the couch and lay silent in profound meditation.

When *Florino* had heard all this mournful rhapsody, he retired and stole away in secret, for he was now ashamed of his first barbarous design : He felt a sort of strange sympathy of sorrow such as he never knew before, and with it some sparks of virtue began to kindle in his bosom. As he mused, the fire burnt within, and at last it made its way to his lips and vented itself. " Well," said he, " I have learnt two excellent lessons to-day, and I hope I shall never forget them. There must be some vast and unknown pleasure in a virtuous love beyond all the madness of wild and transient amours ; otherwise the loss of the object would never have wrought such deep and unfeigned woe in a soul so firm and manly as that of *Lucius*. I begin now to believe what Milton sung, though I always read the lines before as mere poesy and fable.

Hail wedded love, mysterious law, true source  
Of human offspring, sole propriety  
In paradise, of all things common else :  
By thee adulterous lust was driv'n from men  
Among the bestial herds to range ; by thee  
Founded in reason, loyal, just, and pure,  
Relations dear, and all the charities  
Of father, son and brother, first were known :  
Perpetual fountain of domestic sweets.  
Here love his golden shafts employs, hero lights  
His constant lamp, and waves his purple wings,  
Reigns here and revels ; not in the bought smile  
Of harlots, loveless, joyless, unindear'd,  
Casual amours, mixt dance, or wanton mask  
Or midnight ball,' etc.

" Blessed poet, that could so happily unite love and virtue, and draw so beautiful a scene of real felicity, which till this day I always thought was merely romantic and visionary ! *Lucius* has taught me to understand these lines, for he has felt them ; and methinks while I repeat them now, I feel a strange new sensation. I am convinced the blind poet saw deeper into nature and truth than I could have imagined. There is, there is such a thing as a union of virtuous souls, where happiness is only found. I find some glimmerings of sacred light rising upon me, some unknown pantings within after such a partner and such a life.

" Nor is the other lesson which I have learnt at all inferior to this, but in truth it is of higher and more durable importance. I

confess since I was nineteen years old, I never thought virtue and religion had been good for any thing but to tie up children from mischief and frighten fools: But now I find by the conduct of my friend *Lucius*, that as the sweetest and sincerest joys of life are derived from virtue, so the most distressing sorrows may find a just relief in religion and sincere piety. Hear me, thou almighty Maker of my frame, pity and assist a returning wanderer, and O may thy hand stamp these lessons upon my soul in everlasting characters."

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### THOU HAST RECEIVED GIFTS FOR MEN.\*

JESUS the Mediator emptied himself for our sakes when he descended to earth, in order to die for us, and by his death to subdue our enemies, and now the Father has filled him again at his ascent to heaven with every glory and every blessing, with all authority and power to bestow blessings, graces and glories on the sons of men. "It pleased the Father that in him all fulness should dwell. All power in heaven and earth was given into his hands;" *Col. i. 19. Matt. xxviii. 18.* And when he received the power he distributed the blessings. See *Acts ii. 33.* *Being by the right-hand of God exalted, and having received of the Father the promise of the Holy Ghost, he hath shed forth this, which ye now see and hear.* He hath shed abroad miracles and graces in abundance among the inhabitants of the lower world.

The triumphs of majesty must have some mercy in them, and ensigns of victory must be interwoven with signal displays of bounty and grace. When he led captivity captive he received gifts for men. Our conquering Redeemer was not so elevated with the pomp of his triumphs over the angels his captive enemies, as to forget the captives that he released among the children of Adam. He received many donations from his Father on high to shower down among them upon his coronation-day, that illustrious day when "he that in righteousness had made war and conquered, received on his own head many crowns;" *Rev. xix. 11, 12.*

He that could take so much pleasure on earth in his labors of love, takes more delight in heaven in the distributions of grace. This is the sweetest part of his triumph and the most visible among men, even the gifts of the Spirit that he sent down after his ascension. It was necessary that his grace should have some share of the glory of that day.

\* Psalm lxxviii. 18.

What was said of the great day of deliverance, when the Jews obtained victory over their designed murderers, may be applied with honor to the day when our Lord ascended to heaven and celebrated his triumph over the spirits of darkness. "This was a good day for Israel, for all the saints; a day when Jesus rested from his enemies, and a month which was turned unto him from sorrow to joy, and from mourning into a day of gladness. This was a day of receiving portions for his brethren, and of sending gifts to the poor;" *Esther ix. 22.*

Jesus our King is the Prince of Power, and the Prince of Peace. He solemnized his victory with acts of mercy, and began his reign with gifts of grace. He led Satan the arch-traitor bound at his chariot-wheels, and scattered donatives of pardon and life among the sons of Adam that had been seduced into the great rebellion.

It is another pleasant meditation on this text, "That God the Father had not given away all his gifts to men even when he gave them his only begotten Son;" for since that time he hath given his Son more gifts to be distributed among them. Learn hence the unwearyed love of God, the inexhausted stores of divine mercy. *John iv. 10.* Christ is called *the gift of God.* And *2 Cor. ix. 15.* *The unspeakable gift.* He gave his own Son out of his bosom and gave him up to death for us. His Son that was nearest his heart, his Son the delight of his soul and darling of his eternal enjoyment; and yet he is not weary of giving. O the immeasurable treasures of grace! O the unlimitable bounties of our God! Stand amazed, O heavens, and let the earth lie low in thankfulness and wonder, and every holy soul adore this surprising love!

Our meditations may take another step and see here the divine condescension to human weakness: How a giving God stoops to the capacity of receiving creatures, and bestows the richest blessings on us in a sweet and alluring manner of conveyance. When he gave his Son to us, he first arrayed him in flesh and blood, that the glories of the deity might not affright us, nor his terrors make us afraid: When he proceeds to confer on us further gifts, he puts them into the hands of his Son dwelling in our nature, that we might have easy access to him without fear, and receive gifts from him as a delightful medium, by whom a God of infinite purity hath a mind to confer favors on sinful man.

He has put all grace into those hands whence we ourselves would choose to fetch it. If a God of shining holiness and burning justice should appear like himself and call to us, guilty wretches, and hold forth his hand, here are gifts, here are pardons, here are salutations for you, we should be ready to say with *Job xiii. 21.*

*Withdraw thy hand far from me, and let not thy dread make me afraid.* But here we sinners come to a man, to one that has worn our flesh and blood, that is our brother and of our own composition, we come with courage to him that looks like one of us to receive the gifts of a holy God, and the terrors of his holiness sink us not, nor the fire of his justice devour us. O my soul, bow down and worship that God that stoops so low to thee, and has found such a mild and gentle method of conferring his heavenly favors on thee.

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### BILLS OF EXCHANGE. 1705.

WHEN a rich merchant who dwells in a foreign land afar off, commits his treasure to the hands of a banker, it is to be drawn out in smaller sums by his servants or his friends at home as their necessities shall require; and he furnishes them with bills of exchange drawn upon his banker or treasurer, which are paid honorably to the person who offers the bill according to the time when the words of the bill appoint the payment.

Is it not possible to draw a beautiful allegory hence to represent the conduct of the blessed God in his promises of grace, without debasing so divine a subject?

God the Father, the spring and fountain of all grace, dwells in regions of light and holiness inaccessible, too far off for us to converse with him or receive supplies from him in an immediate way; but he has sent the Son to dwell in human nature, and constituted him Treasurer of all his blessings, that we might derive perpetual supplies from his hand: He has intrusted him with all the riches of grace and glory; he has laid up infinite stores of love, wisdom, strength, pardon, peace and consolation in the hands of his Son for this very purpose, to be drawn out thence as fast as the necessities of his saints require. It pleased the Father that in him should all fulness dwell. "He has received gifts for men." *Col. i. 19. Psalm lxviii. 18.*

Now all the promises in the Bible, are so many bills of exchange drawn by God the Father in heaven upon his Son Jesus Christ, and payable to every pious bearer; that is, to every one that comes to the mercy-seat and offers the promise for acceptance, and pleads it in a way of obedient faith and prayer. Jesus the High-Treasurer of heaven, knows every letter of his Father's hand-writing, and can never be imposed upon by a forged note; he will ever put due honor upon his Father's bills; he accepts them all, for "all the

promises in him are yea, and in him amen. In him they are all sure to the glory of the Father ; 2 Cor. i. 20. It is for the Father's honor that his bills never fail of acceptance and payment.

If you apply to the blessed Jesus and offer him a bill of the largest sum, a promise of the biggest blessings, he will never say, "I have not so much of my Father's treasure in my hand." For he has received all things. John. iii. 35. *The Father loveth the Son, and hath given all things into his hand :* And may I not venture to say, This whole treasure is made over to the saints, *All things are yours ;* 1 Cor. iii. 22. And they are parcelled out into bills of promise, and notes under the Father's hand. So the whole treasure of a nation sometimes consists in credit and in promissory notes more than in present sums of gold and silver.

Some of these divine bills are payable at sight, and we receive the sum as soon as we offer the bill, namely, those that must supply our present wants ; such as, *Call upon me in the day of trouble, and I will deliver thee, and thou shalt glorify me ;* Psalm l. 15. And there have been many examples of such speedy payment. Psalm cviii. 3. *In the day when I cried thou answeredst me, and strengthenedest me with strength in my soul.*

Some are only payable in general at a distant time, and that is left to the discretion of Christ the treasurer, namely, *As thy day is so thy strength shall be ;* Deut. xxxiii. 25. and we need never fear trusting him long, for this bank in the hands of Christ can never fail ; *for in him dwelleth all the fulness of the Godhead bodily ;* Col. ii. 9. And *Eph.* iii. 8. we are told of *the unsearchable riches of Christ.*

Sometimes Christ may put us off with a general kind answer, or give us a note under his hand, payable at demand in several parcels instead of a full payment all at once : Thus he dealt with his dear friend and servant Paul, in 2 Cor. xii. 9. Doubtless Paul, in his seeking the Lord thrice for the removal of his thorn in the flesh, had pleaded several large promises of God, had offered those divine bills to Christ for acceptance and payment ; but instead of this our Lord gives him a note under his own hand, which ran in this language, *My grace is sufficient for thee.* And if we had but the faith which that blessed apostle had, we might live upon this hope : This would be as good as present payment ; for if he delay to give the full sum, it is only because he sees we have not need of it at present : He knows our necessities better than we ourselves ; he will not trust us with too much at once in our own hands ; but he pays us those bills when he sees the fittest time, and we have often found it so, and confessed his faithfulness.

At other times he pays us, but not in the same kind of mercy which is mentioned in the promise, yet in something more useful and valuable. If the promise mention a temporal blessing, he may give us a spiritual one; if it express ease, he may give patience: and thus his Father's bills are always honored, and we have no reason to complain. So the banker may discharge a bill of a hundred pounds not with money, but with such goods and merchandise as may yield us two hundred, and we gladly confess the bill is well paid.

Some of these promises, these bills of heavenly treasure, are not made payable till the hour of our death, as, *Blessed are those servants whom when the Lord comes he shall find watching, &c.* Luke xii. 37. *He that endureth to the end, the same shall be saved.* Matt. xxiv. 13. *Be thou faithful unto death and I will give thee a crown of life.* Rev. ii. 10.

Others are not due till the day of the resurrection; as, *Them who sleep in Jesus will God bring with him;* 1 Thess. iv. 14. *I will redeem them from death;* Hosea xiii. 14. Col. iii. 4. *When Christ who is our life shall appear, then shall ye also appear with him in glory.* Phil. iii. 21. *He shall change our vile body, that it may be fashioned like unto his glorious body.* 1 Pet. v. 4. *And when the chief Shepherd shall appear, ye shall receive a crown of glory that fadeth not away.*

Now when the great day shall come in which our Lord Jesus Christ shall give up his mediatorial kingdom to the Father, and render an account of all his stewardship, how fair will his books appear! How just a balance will stand at the foot of all his accounts! Then shall he shew in what manner he has fulfilled the promises to the saints, and present to the Father all the bills that he has received and discharged; while all the saints shall with one voice attest it to the honor of the High-Treasurer of heaven, that he has not failed in payment even to the smallest farthing.

### PRAISE WAITETH FOR, THEE O GOD, IN ZION.\*

AND does praise wait for God in the congregation of his saints? Surely it doth not use to be so. Mercy uses to be beforehand with us, and the Lord waiteth to be gracious. Mercy is wont to be ready in the hands of God, before praise is ready on the tongues of men; and we are sure he waited on us to shew his grace long be-

\* Psalm lxv. 1.

fore we had any songs ready for him, or any thought of praising him. Yet sometimes it is so in this lower world : Holy souls may be waiting at the throne of grace with their praises ready to ascend as soon as mercy appears : Mercy may be silent for a season, and then praise for a season is silent too. This is the original language of the psalm, and this the state of things when the psalmist wrote ; "Praise is silent for thee in Zion." When the church of God under trouble has been long seeking any particular blessing or deliverance, and God's appointed hour of salvation is not yet come, then the songs of the church are silent : Yet she stands watching and waiting for the desired moment, that she may meet the salvation with praise.

But why should God suffer praise to be silent at all in Zion ? Is not the church the habitation of his praises ? Yes, but it is the house of prayer too : Prayer and patience must have their proper exercise. If praise were never silent on earth, where would there be any room for prayer to speak ? When would there be any season for the grace of patience to shew itself ? God loves prayer as well as praise : His sovereignty is honored by humble waiting, as well as his goodness by holy gratitude and joy. If praise be silent then let prayer be more fervent. The absent Saviour loves to hear the voice of his beloved ; the lips of the church must never be quite silent, though they are not always employed in hallelujahs.

Praise is the sweetest part of divine worship ; it is a short heaven here on earth. God lets our praises be silent sometimes to teach us that this is not a state of complete blessedness. After the great day of decision, praise shall be continual and unceasing, when there shall be no more sighing for the saints, no more death, no more pain. Then churches shall want ordinances no more, nor saints abstain from the bread of life. Jesus their everlasting Pastor shall feed them in pastures ever green, and from the tree of life, and lead them to the fountains of joy and the streams where eternal pleasures run. O may our souls wait with joyful hope for that day, and our praises shall not be silent.

Yet it is not with the church as it is with the world when praise is silent in both. It is ever silent among the wicked, because they are forgetful of God their Maker ; it is only silent among the saints for a season, when their God seems to frown and hide himself, and as it were to forget his people.

Besides, Let us consider that all praise is not silent there. Daily incense arises before God in his temple, though particular thank-offerings wait till particular mercies are received. Praise for all the greatest mercies, namely, for redeeming grace, for electing love, for

the sanctifying Spirit, is never silent in Zion. *Psalm lxxxiv. 4. Blessed are they that dwell in thine house, they will be still praising thee.* But praise for some special favors may be silent for a season as well as that large revenue of praise that shall grow due at the accomplishment of all the promises and the consummation of blessedness.

Again, The praises of God are silent in the world without any design of breaking forth, but the silence of the church longs to be lost in joyful songs of thanksgiving. It is like an engine charged with praise that wants only the warm touch of mercy to make it shine with the glories of heavenly worship, and sound aloud the name of the God of Zion.

Sometimes God is as well pleased that praise should wait with humble silence, as that it should speak. It shows a well-disposed frame and temper of soul that longs to honor God. The hearts of his saints are instruments of music to the Lord ; he has formed their souls for his glory, and tuned their heart-strings to his own praise. Now he loves to see them kept still in tune, though he does not always play his own praises upon them ; he neither wants our services nor our songs, for his own perfections are an everlasting harmony to himself without the slender notes that we can sound.

We may make this sweet remark at last, That Zion on earth shall be joined to Jerusalem above ; the family below shall be joined to the upper house, for they have learnt the work of heaven, their hearts are tuned to praise ; they want only such harps as angels have to bring glory down and make a heaven on this earth. In 1 Chron. xi. 4. we are told that David took Zion from the Jebusites, and built it round about, and added it to Jerusalem. So shall Jesus the true David, the King of saints, take this earthly Zion from the powers of this wicked world, and shall build and adorn it around with glory and strength, with perfect beauty and complete grace, and add it to the Jerusalem which is above. Look upwards O souls who are full of praises, and are even impatient to speak the glories of your God, look to Jerusalem above, where praise is constant and never ceasing, and rejoice to think that you shall be made inhabitants of that city, and united to the glorious church. It is your chief pleasure here to be praising your God, and it is the chief pleasure of your fellow-saints on high : Where happiness is perfect, praise is perfect too and never silent.

It is the chief delight of happy souls there to run over the glories of their God, and tell one another joyfully, and humbly tell their God, what a wise, what a holy, what an almighty and all-gracious God he is. Every breath of praise is a new gale of pleasure there ; it is sweet breathing in air perfumed with praises, and this climate is most

agreeable to your new nature and your constitution, you that are members and parts of Zion ; and you shall be translated thither to your kindred souls. In heaven the river of pleasure springs from God's right hand, because Jesus the Saviour sits there. It is a river that makes glad the city of God, and every stream, as it flows along the golden streets, murmurs sweet praises to the fountain.

But heaven and the state of glory are not yet complete : The church waits above for many promises that are not yet fulfilled, and future blessings that are yet unknown. The work of grace is not finished till the great resurrection-day ; and heaven itself, in all the blissful regions of it, waits for such praises as the ear of men or angels has never yet heard.

While the whole church of God on earth is in a state of imperfection and trial, a state of sins and sorrows, praise waits in all the sanctuaries below, and in Zion above too. The souls in glory wait for complete salvation and the redemption of their bodies from the grave. On the harps of angels praise sits waiting, and it waits also on the tongue of Jesus the intercessor. His prayers shall one day change all at once into praises, and lift the praises of angels and of embodied saints to higher notes than ever yet they knew. O the voices, and the songs, the joys, the raptures of that moment, of that day, of that eternity, when such a multitude of praises shall burst out at once, that have been waiting long in that Zion, and shall become an everlasting praise ! When Jesus the Son of God the Mediator shall lead the worship, and the praises that have been growing these seventeen hundred years on his tongue shall break forth and spread themselves abroad, and all the creation shall hear, and all echo to his song *Glory to God in the highest*. This is what we wait and hope for, and long to bear a part in those pleasures and those praises.

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### O THAT I KNEW WHERE I MIGHT FIND HIM!\*

AMONG all the various kinds and orders of God's intellectual creation, there is not one that uses this language besides a mourning saint in this lower world. As for all other spirits, whether dwelling in flesh or not, their wishes are expressed in a very different manner, nor do they seek and long to find out an absent God.

If we ascend up to heaven and enquire there what are the wishes of those blessed spirits, we shall find that their enjoyments are so

\* Job xxiii. 3.

glorious and their satisfactions rise so high in the immediate presence of God amongst them, that they have nothing of this nature left to wish for : They know that their God is with them, and all their wish is, what they are assured to enjoy, that this God will be with them for ever.

If we descend to the regions of hell where God reigns, in vengeance, we shall hear those unhappy spirits groaning out many a fruitless wish, "O that I knew where I might avoid him, that I might get out of his sight, out of his notice and reach for ever. I feel his dreadful presence, and O that it were possible for me to be utterly absent from him and to find a place where God is not!"

If we take the wings of the morning, and fly to the utmost parts of the eastern or the western world, we shall find the language of those ignorant heathens, "O that I knew where I might find food, and plenty, and all sensual delights!" But they send not a wish after the great God, though he has been so many ages absent from them and their fathers. He is unknown to them, and they have no desires working in them after an unknown God.

If we tarry at home and survey the bulk of mankind around us, the voice of their wishes sounds much the same as that of the heathen world, "O that I knew where I might find trade and merchandise, riches and honors, corn, wine, and oil, the necessaries or the superfluous luxuries of life!" But God is not in all their thoughts. If they frequent the temples, and attend the seasons of worship, they are well enough satisfied with outward forms without the sight of God in them. There is no natural man that with a sincere longing of soul cries out, "O that I knew where to find him!"

As for the children of God that live in the light of their Father's countenance, they walk with him daily and hourly, they behold him near them by the eye of faith, and they feel the sweet influences of his gracious presence ; their highest ambition and their dearest wishes are, "O that he might abide for ever with me, and keep me for ever near to himself!"

The words of this Scripture therefore can only be the language of a saint on earth in distress and darkness, when God who was wont to visit him with divine communications, and to meet him in his addresses to the throne of grace, has withdrawn himself for a season, and left the soul to grapple with many difficulties alone.

This was the case of that holy man whose sorrows and complaints have furnished out almost a whole book of Scripture, and supplied the saints in all succeeding ages with the forms and speeches of pious mourning. It is the voice of a sacred impatience that Job

here utters, “O that I knew where I might find him!” And by a plain paraphrase we may learn both the meaning and the reason of such language, and be taught by his example to lament after an absent God.

Let us suppose the saint therefore pouring out his soul in such sort of expressions as these, in which I shall not entirely confine myself to the darkness of the patriarchal dispensation under which Job lived, but indulge the language of the New Testament and personate a mourning Christian.

Time was when I had a God near me, and upon every new distress and difficulty I made him my present refuge; I was wont to call upon him in an hour of darkness, and he shone upon my path with divine light. He has often taught me to read my duty in his providences, or in his word, or by some secret hints of his own Spirit, even while I have been kneeling at the throne of grace; but now I find not my usual signs and tokens. My Guide and my Counsellor is withdrawn; “O that I knew where I might find him!”

He was once my kind assistant in every duty, and my support under every burden: I have found the grace of my Lord sufficient for me in my sharpest conflicts, his strength has appeared in my weakness. When my spiritual enemies have beset me round, he has scattered them before me, or subdued them under me; and being held up by his everlasting arms I have stood my ground, and borne up my head under the weight of heavy sorrows; but now I am attacked on all sides, my soul wrestles hard with sins and temptations, and I find no assistance no victory: I sink under my present sorrows; for my God, my strength, and my comforter is absent, and afar off; “O that I knew where I might find him!”

My God was wont to deal with me as a compassionate friend; when Satan accused, he has justified. He has shewn me the all-sufficient sacrifice of his Son, and that spotless righteousness of his which has answered all the demands of his own holy law, and cancelled all the charges of guilt that the devil or my own conscience could bring against me. He has taught me by faith to put my soul under the sprinklings of this sacred blood, and to wrap around me the robe of this divine righteousness; he himself has arrayed me in garments of salvation. But now the army of my sins rises up before me, and overwhelms my spirit with many terrors; Satan the accuser urges on the charge, and my Saviour and his righteousness are as it were hidden from me. “O that I knew where I might find him!”

Many a censure have I borne from men, and had my reputation

assaulted and my good name blackened with many a scandal. But when man reproached me God has undertook my cause, and made my righteousness shine as the light, and my innocence as the noon-day ; I could then pour out my soul before him, tell him all my sorrows in flowing language, and feel sweet relief; but now, alas! troubles and reproaches are multiplied upon me, and he does not seem to take my part; my spirit is bound and shut up, and I am cut off from that free converse, that humble holy intimacy which I once enjoyed with my God ; I cry out of wrong, but I am not heard : I cry aloud, but there is no judgment. Will he not help me to pray ? Will he not hear my groans and requests ? Hath God forgotten to be gracious ? Yet I would seek his face still, and "O that I knew where I might find him !"

Often have I seen him in his own ordinances in the place of public worship ; I have seen his power and his glory in the sanctuary : I have found him in secret corners, and my meditation of him has been exceeding sweet. In dark retirements he has smiled on my soul, and has often given me reviving light. I have found him in his works, and I have had a fairer sight of him in his word ; I can name the places, the pleasant lines in my Bible, and say, "I have seen the face of my God here : But now the Bible itself is like a sealed book, or like a strange language which I cannot understand ; I hear not the voice of my God speaking to me there ; I go forward to his promises, and read what he will do for his people, but I perceive him not ; backward to his past providences or to my own experiences, and review what he has done, but there is a darkness there too : I turn to my left hand amongst his works of nature, but I do not see him ; I seek him on my right hand amongst his works of grace, but still he hides himself that I cannot behold him. *ver. 8, 9.* "I wander in the night and enquire after him, I watch for him more than they that watch for the morning, I say more than they that watch for the morning. O that I knew where I might find him ?"

And it is no wonder that I am so impatient under the painful sense of his present distance from me, and so importunate for his return : For I have known the dreadful case of utter distance from him in a state of nature and sin, and I have tasted something of the pleasure of being brought nigh by grace, and now I dread every thing that looks like that old distance, that estrangement ; I would fain renew those divine pleasures of a returning and a reconciled God : "O that I knew where I might find him !"

Besides I bethink myself and say, "What shall I do without a God !" for I find all creatures utterly insufficient to relieve and help

me ; and I have known something of God's all-sufficiency ; he has been my helper in six troubles and in seven ; he is my only hope : When creatures stand aloof from me, and each of them say, " There is no help in me," whither should I go then but to my God ? " O that I knew where I might find him ! "

I have been so much used to live upon him, and found his divine aids and influences so necessary to my life and my peace, that I sink and die at his absence. I feel within myself a sort of heavenly instinct that I want his presence, and cannot live without him. I know he stands in no need of me, for he gives to all his creatures life and breath, and being ; but I need his counsels and his comforts, his strength and his love : My soul is touched with such a divine influence that it cannot rest while God withdraws, as the needle trembles and hunts after the hidden loadstone. If my God retire and hide himself, he will forgive a creature that loves him so well as to follow hard after him without ceasing, and is impatient and restless till he search him out : " O that I knew where I might find him ! "

Though God is pleased to depart from me for a season, yet I cannot let go all my hope : he hides himself from my soul, yet I dare not think him an enemy, but only a concealed friend : If I could get near him even to his seat, I know I should find it a mercy-seat, though perhaps judgment may sit there too. It is a throne of grace, says a Christian, because Jesus is there with the blood of atonement ; and having such an High-Priest over the house of God, and such a new and living way of access by the blood of Christ, I will seek after him and address myself to him ; I will confess mine iniquities before him, and be sorry for my sins, which may have beclouded or eclipsed my heavenly sun, and hid his face from me, I fear I have grieved his blessed Spirit, and provoked him to withdraw his kind influences of light, strength and comfort ; nor will I cease grieving for his absence till he return again.

Come, O eternal Spirit, come and visit my poor dark and disconsolate soul ; come and awaken all my powers to follow hard after my Father and my God. Come, invigorate my faith, and lead me to the Mediator the blessed Jesus ; come, open to me the promises and let me into the covenant of his unchangeable love ratified and sealed with blood. If ever I find my God again, it is there I know, I must find him ; Christ is the only way to the Father. It is by the interest of his Son I shall get near to him, even to his seat ; then will I pour out all my woes and my wants in his sight, I will order my cause before him and fill my mouth with arguments. Will he plead against me with his great power ? No,

but he will put strength in me, and assist and suffer me to prevail with him.

Then, when I have found him whom my soul loveth, I will hold him fast and not let him go : I will charge all the powers and passions of my nature not to yield to one sinful practice, nor provoke him to depart ; for he is my everlasting and my almighty friend.

Then, though I should have a thousand enemies set themselves against me, I would not be afraid : yea, though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I will fear no evil, for I have found my God, and my God is with me.

# P O E M S.

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## DIVINE JUDGMENTS.

Not from the dust my sorrows spring,  
Nor drop my comforts from the lower skies :  
    Let all the baneful planets shed  
    Their mingled curses on my head,  
How vain their curses, if th' eternal King  
    Look thro' the clouds and bless me with his eyes.

Creatures with all their boasted sway  
    Are but his slaves and must obey ;  
They wait their orders from above,  
And execute his word, the vengeance, or the love.

'Tis by a warrant from his hand  
    The gentler gales are bound to sleep :  
The north wind blusters, and assumes command  
    Over the desert and the deep ;  
    Old Boreas with his freezing pow'rs  
Turns the earth iron, makes the ocean glass,  
Arrests the dancing riv'lets as they pass,  
    And chains them moveless to their shores ;  
The grazing ox lows to the gelid skies,  
Walks o'er the marble meads with withering eyes,  
Walks o'er the solid lakes, snuffs up the wind, and dies.

Fly to the polar world, my song,  
And mourn the pilgrims there (a wretched throng !)  
Seiz'd and bound in rigid chains,  
A troop of statues on the Russian plains,  
And life stands frozen in the purple veins.  
Atheist, forbear ; no more blaspheme :  
God has a thousand terrors in his name,  
    A thousand armies at command,  
    Waiting the signal of his hand,  
And magazines of frost, and magazines of flame.  
    Dress thee in steel to meet his wrath ;  
    His sharp artillery from the north  
Shall pierce thee to the soul, and shake thy mortal frame.

Sublime on winter's rugged wings

He rides in arms along the sky,

And scatters fate on swains and kings;

And flocks and herds and nations die;

While impious lips, profanely bold,

Grow pale; and, quivering at his dreadful cold,

Give their own blasphemies the lie.

The mischiefs that infest the earth,

When the hot dog-star fires the realms on high,

Drought and disease, and cruel dearth,

Are but the flashes of a wrathful eye

From the incens'd divinity.

In vain our parching palates thirst,

For vital food in vain we cry,

And pant for vital breath;

The verdant fields are burnt to dust,

The sun has drunk the channels dry,

And all the air is death.

Ye scourges of our Maker's rod,

'Tis at his dread command, at his imperial nod,

You deal your various plagues abroad.

Hail, whirlwinds, hurricanes and floods

That all the leafy standards strip,

And bear down with a mighty sweep

The riches of the fields, and honors of the woods;

Storms, that ravage o'er the deep,

And bury millions in the waves;

Earthquakes, that in midnight-sleep

Turn cities into heaps, and make our beds our graves?

While you dispense your mortal harms,

'Tis the Creator's voice that sounds your loud alarms,

When guilt with louder cries provokes a God to arms.

O for a message from above

To bear my spirits up!

Some pledge of my Creator's love

To calm my terrors and support my hope!

Let waves and thunders mix and roar,

Be thou my God, and the whole world is mine:

While thou art sov'reign, I'm secure:

I shall be rich till thou art poor;

For all I fear, and all I wish, heav'n, earth and hell are thine.

## THE DAY OF JUDGMENT.

AN ODE ATTEMPTED IN ENGLISH SAPPHIC.

## I.

WHEN the fierce north wind with his airy forces  
 Rears up the Baltic to a foaming fury ;  
 And the red lightning, with a storm of hail comes  
 Rushing amain down,

## II.

How the poor sailors stand amaz'd and tremble !  
 While the hoarse thunder, like a bloody trumpet,  
 Roars a loud onset to the gaping waters  
 Quick to devour them.

## III.

Such shall the noise be, and the wild disorder,  
 (If things eternal may be like these earthly)  
 Such the dire terror when the great Archangel  
 Shakes the creation ;

## IV.

Tears the strong pillars of the vault of heaven,  
 Breaks up old marble, the repose of princes ;  
 See the graves open, and the bones arising,  
 Flames all around 'em !

## V.

Hark, the shrill outcries of the guilty wretches !  
 Lively bright horror, and amazing anguish,  
 Stare thro' their eye-lids, while the living worm lies  
 Gnawing within them !

## VI.

Thoughts, like old vultures, prey upon their heart-strings,  
 And the smart twinges, when the eye beholds the  
 Lofty Judge frowning, and a flood of vengeance  
 Rolling afore him.

## VII.

Hopeless immortals ! how they scream and shiver  
 While devils push them to the pit wide-yawning  
 Hideous and gloomy to receive them headlong  
 Down to the centre.

## VIII.

Stop here, my fancy : (All away, ye horrid  
 Doleful ideas,) come, arise to Jesus,  
 How he sits God-like, and the saints around him  
 Thron'd, yet adoring !

## IX.

O may I sit there when he comes triumphant,  
 Dooming the nations! then ascend to glory,  
 While our hosannas all along the passage  
 Shout the Redeemer!

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## BREATHING TOWARD THE HEAVENLY COUNTRY.\*

Urit me Patriæ Decor, etc.

THE beauty of my native land  
 Immortal love inspires ;  
 I burn, I burn with strong desires,  
 And sigh, and wait the high command.  
 There glides the moon her shining way,  
 And shoots my heart thro' with a silver ray,  
 Upward my heart aspires :  
 A thousand lamps of golden light  
 Hung high in vaulted azure, charm my sight,  
 And wink and beckon with their amorous fires.  
 O ye fair glories of my heavenly home,  
 Bright sentinels who guard my Father's court,  
 Where all the happy minds resort,  
 When will my Father's chariot come ?  
 Must we for ever walk the ethereal round ?  
 For ever see the mourner lie  
 An exile of the sky,  
 A pris'ner of the ground ?  
 Descend some shining servants from on high,  
 Build me a hasty tomb ;  
 A grassy turf will raise my head ;  
 The neighboring lilies dress my bed ;  
 And shed a cheap perfume.  
 Here I put off the chains of death,  
 My soul too long has worn :  
 Friends, I forbid one groaning breath,  
 Or tear to wet my urn ;  
 Raphael, behold me all unrest,  
 Here gently lay this flesh to rest ;  
 Then mount, and lead the path unknown,  
 Swift I pursue thee, flaming guide, on pinions of my own.

\* Casimire, book i. od. 19. Imitated.











